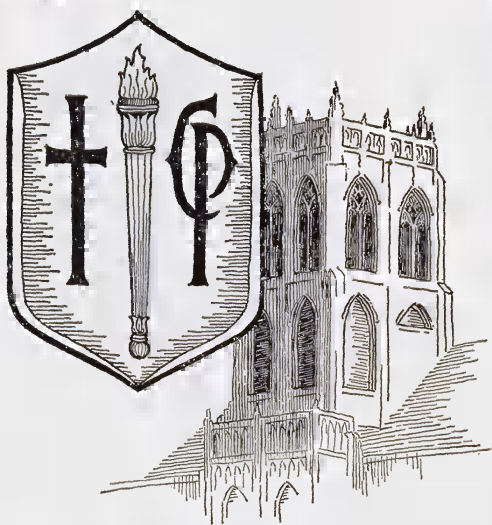


Georgian Stories

1922



COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC

GEORGIAN STORIES

1922



ARNOLD LUNNI

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College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

GEORGIAN STORIES

1922

WITH PORTRAITS OF THE AUTHORS

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FOREWORD

WRITERS who undertake to describe the people of one generation or another and to analyze their methods of thought and of life, lay stress sometimes upon one form of expression of the activities of the generation and sometimes on another. Carlyle, for instance, finds it sufficient for his purpose to restrict his investigation of society to the leaders, the strong men, of the period. Carlyle takes the ground that the character and the career of the man selected and honored as a leader constitutes a fair test of the ideal, the purposes and the consciences of the people who constitute the followers of the leader. The community gets the kind of ruler that it deserves and the ruler expresses the feeling and the character of his subjects. We know the ideals of the men of Athens in 400 B.C., in recalling the utterances and the character of Pericles. We know something about the Prussian standards of ambition, of life, and of "morality," if such a term can be ascribed to Prussian Kultur, in reconstituting the life of Frederick the Great (so called) or of his feeble imitation the late Kaiser.

We recognize something of the ideals and the world-wide ambitions not of France as a whole, but of a great proportion of Frenchmen who accepted and followed to the death Napoleon the First, in recalling the utterances of Napoleon himself, utterances which set forth his ambitions and his theory and practice of life. Other

historians take the ground that the influence of hero leadership and of hero worship has been much exaggerated. They contend that the historian who restricts his narrative to the successes of the victorious general, or the actions of the dominant rulers, loses the larger part of the life of the people. These writers investigate social details and give time to the study of the personalities of average domestic life. A writer of this kind, will give us such a book as Bennett's "Five Towns," with its photographic presentation of the character and nature of certain groups of the folk of Staffordshire.

Still others, regarding the problem from the literary point of view, will tell us that the method of thought and the nature of the interests of the generation, or at least of that portion of the generation which knows how to read and which does something in the way of thinking, can be arrived at most effectively by studying the literature, and particularly the fiction, produced within years of the generation. They point out that the writers belonging themselves to the time that they were for the most part describing, were the product of that time. They were the people of the generation who could, and who did, express the thoughts and the feelings of their fellows. These writers, therefore, lay stress on the value of current fiction for including the direction of the thought of the writers and the nature of the interests of the readers. Stories would not be produced, or would not continue to be produced, unless there was a sufficient current demand to make the publication and distribution of the stories remunerative to the writers investing the labor and to the publishers risking the money. There is certainly much to be said as to the value of the current fiction of one decade or another for its value in picturing the life, the thought, and the interests of the writing people and of the reading

people of that decade, and it is after all only with the people that think that the world's history needs seriously concern itself. The peasant, working in the field, has something to do, of course, with the make-up of the nation. He helps to produce the food and when the nation is fighting for its life, he is called upon to expend his body in its defense; but the peasant has been so nearly the same kind of a creature in all the recorded life of man that his inner nature can but seldom concern the chronicler, or the reader of the chronicle. The peasant doubtless does do thinking of his own, but as he cannot express himself we shall seldom know what he thinks and, as said, there is probably little difference between any consciousness that might be dignified with the name of thought on the part of one worker in the field or of another.

It is with the belief that the presentation of selected and typical fiction will not only have interest as literature but value as a study of mental conditions and of social phenomena, that the editors of the collection which is in course of publication under the general title of "Georgian Stories," have done their work. One cannot examine the collection which constitutes the first volume of the series, without being impressed by the distinctive character of the fiction of the early twentieth century as compared with that of the early or mid-Victorian period. The readers of my generation in giving attention to these examples of the fiction of writers like Beresford, E. M. Forster, F. Tennyson Jesse, D. H. Lawrence, Lennox Robinson and the others in the group, from the writings of whom these stories have been selected, naturally make comparison of their productions with those of Dickens, Charles Reade, Thackeray, Miss Mulock, Mrs. Gaskell, and the other fiction writers of the Victorian group.

The stories of the fifties and early sixties concerned

themselves very directly with the occurrences of actual life. They were frequently character studies of the people whom the writers had met and had talked with. In the sketches by Dickens, these characters have been painted with the standard of stage scenery. Dickens had seen the people, had noted peculiar features of one kind or another, and then had thrown these upon a screen on which the figures and the traits had been enlarged, sometimes to the point of absurdity. But the characters always start from real people. We feel that Dickens had really known the men and the women, had noted the walk, or the teeth, or some other physical detail, or actual expression, and, working from his note-book up, had, in his literary expression, made these features emphatic enough to be recognized by the mass of the people.

The Blackwood Stories, which take rank as the best of the magazine fiction of the middle of the nineteenth century, have to do, in like manner, with real occurrences, with real people, even though the particular events never actually happened, and they recall without exaggeration, interesting or amusing conditions or complications. One would never think for the fiction of these years to use the term unwholesome, and not often could it be described as fanciful.

The first impression that comes to the reader of the Georgian Stories is that, with hardly an exception, they have to do with conditions that can only be described as abnormal, morbid, fanciful to the point of gruesomeness. Clever they certainly are. The story once begun cannot be left unread, but the memory is not a pleasant one.

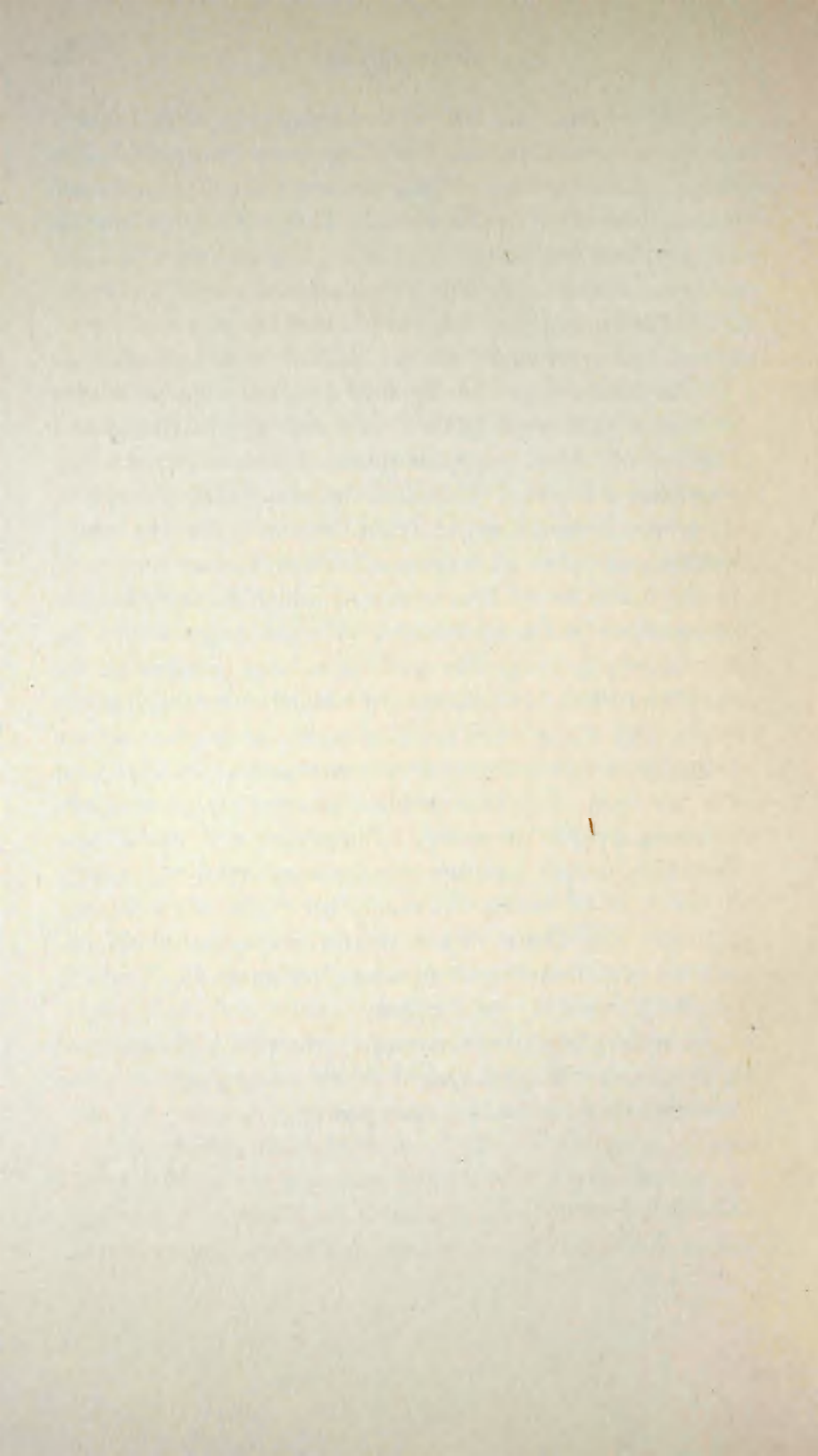
The reader, or at least the reader of the older generation, who can at any time re-read with fresh pleasure the sketches of Dickens, or Reade, or Gaskell, or of the Blackwood group, would not, as a rule, take up for a second

reading the mystical fancies and imagining of this group of clever writers whose work has come into note in the reign of George V. These writers take life and take themselves very seriously indeed. They are impressed with the problems of the universe; with the relations of men to the unseen universe; with psychical and moral problems. These stories, if they are read with respect for the purpose of the authors, call for careful thinking, such as would certainly not be involved in perusing the stories of Dickens's "Seven Poor Travellers," or the Blackwood History of "How we made money last year in the Glenmutchkin Railway." The contrast is quite in order, but, of course, it would not be fair to conclude that the whole of this generation of readers of fiction is absorbing itself in the problems of life, problems which were so largely disregarded by the Victorians. We simply point out the impression given by the work of a large portion of the fiction writers of today, a group which is very much at the front, and whose stories will certainly be taken, and can properly be taken, by the later historians as indicative of the methods of certain groups of thoughtful English-speaking people of today. The Georgian Stories are, therefore, in my judgment, to be considered not merely in that light of fiction that is entitled to the attention, and that will hold the attention, of the reader, but as an important contribution to the nature, the mentality, and the intellectual activity of the time.

I should add that the stories represent a high standard of literary expression, and of nearly all of them it can be said that they are written with power.

G. H. P.

October, 1922.



EDITOR'S PREFACE

"GEORGIAN STORIES" is published in the hope that the art of the short story is once again coming into its own, for the short story, like other forms of Art, has its periods of prosperity and its periods of decline. "The nineties," as Mr. Wells has reminded us in the preface of his own delightful short stories, "was a good and stimulating period for a short story writer." The decade that followed was less stimulating for the very good reason, as Mr. Wells points out, that adequate criticism of short stories no longer found its way into the columns of the Press. "I do not know," adds Mr. Wells, "how far the decline in short-story writing may not be due to that. Every sort of Artist demands human responses, and few men can contrive to write merely for a publisher's cheque. A mad millionaire who commissioned masterpieces to burn would find it impossible to buy. Scarcely any Artist will hesitate in the choice between money and attention; and it was primarily for the last and better sort of pay that the short stories of the nineties were written. People talked about them tremendously, compared them, and ranked them. That was the thing that mattered."

"Georgian Stories" is an attempt to earn that "last and better sort of pay." The moment seems opportune, for those who have followed with interest the fortunes of the English short story must have noticed a slow but steady revival of interest in this fascinating form of literary Art.

More good short stories are being written to-day than when Mr. Wells raised his lament for the lost glories of the nineties. I would not dare to assert that those glories have come again. As Mr. Wells explains, that kind of revival depends largely on the attitude of the critical public.

"Georgian Stories" is not the work of any one school; it is not a manifesto of the ultra modern. The editor's own preferences are rather for the old-fashioned story with a dramatic plot and a surprise curtain than for the modern subtle and psychological study of emotions. Both types, however, have their charm, and both types of story will be found in these pages. The editor's aim has been to produce a collection which shall be thoroughly representative of the modern short story as it is being written in England to-day. The stories in this volume are from, in the main, the work of younger writers, of those who began to publish in the Georgian period. It is hoped to issue "Georgian Stories" annually or biennially if "the better sort of pay" makes the enterprise worth while.

In conclusion the editor desires to express his sincere thanks to the contributors who have made possible this collection, and to the publishers who have so kindly allowed him to republish copyright matter. Where a story has already appeared in book-form or in a magazine the source of the story and the publisher are indicated in their proper place.

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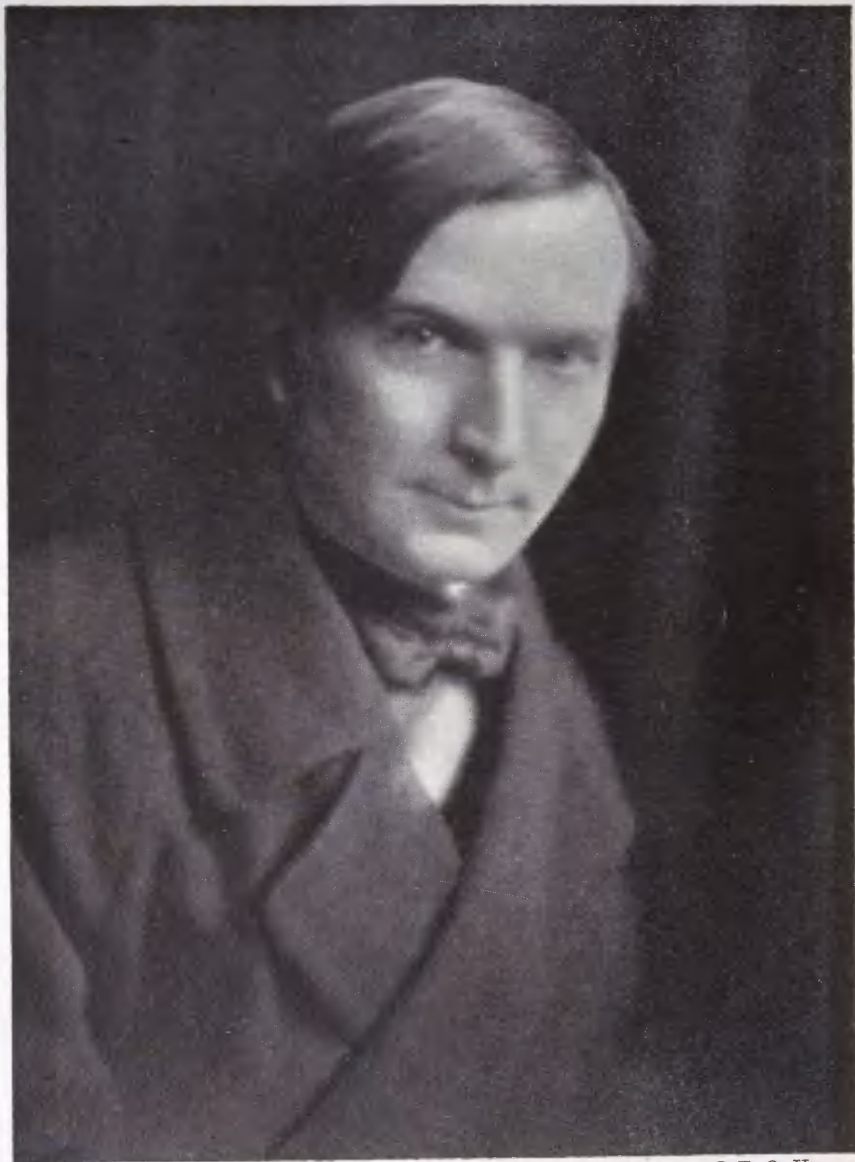
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STACY AUMONIER

From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

STACY AUMONIER

THE BEAUTIFUL MERCILESS LADY

(A COMPLETE STORY)

THERE are few men strong enough to withstand success. She is the beautiful merciless lady.

At the first tap on the shoulder the victim of her favour rocks and staggers. She glances into his eyes, and unless he is a creature of superb control he loses his head. He plunges hither and thither, clutching at the golden aura in which she seems to float. He feels himself a thing apart, transcendent, impervious, invincible. The world of pigmy men around him are merely the drab background to a brilliant picture. He can do no wrong. The standards of morality and behaviour which these others have set up are not his standards. He is the darling of the gods, and he follows his mistress up and up, leaping from crag to crag on the slope of the sunlit mountain.

Whither?

He never puts this query to himself. He lives in a welter of exultation. All things are charged with the magic of a thousand revelations. The younger he is when she first meets him the more devastating are her allurements. Possibly this is why so many infant prodigies never emerge from the infant stage. She stifles them with a surfeit of her riches—the little bores! She likes men best in their early manhood, when she may

flirt with them at her leisure. The old she seldom troubles about. They know her wiles and are frequently too cunning or too weary.

Oh, but the young man, still with beauty and health and clean, strong limbs!

It was such a one that she met in the person of my friend, Johnny Lydgate. She led him away and destroyed him as completely as the rose is destroyed by the breath of autumn winds.

There was no reason why he should have been destroyed, no exterior cause. He had a thousand friends and no enemy, except the one which she created in himself. Everything tended to produce in Johnny Lydgate a creature of gentle bearing, of sanity, and equipoise. His father was a delightful old gentleman, a librarian in a country town, who kept homing pigeons and compiled anthologies. His mother and sisters were charming and lovable women. They formed a united, devoted family.

It was at Stoneleigh College that I first met Lydgate. We were inseparable companions for nearly four years. My recollections of him there were those of a pleasant, companionable, almost negative schoolboy. He excelled at nothing, and displayed no ambitions. He was affectionate, intelligent, and amusing, but at work and at sport he never rose above mediocrity.

We know a man's body by the familiar regard of its movements and expressions. We know the quality of his mind as it is revealed to us through his opinions and observations, but it is strange how we may get to know a man's soul by some instant of revelation. We may think we are entirely familiar with him. We may have known him intimately for twenty years or more, but one day we suddenly experience a stab of recognition of something deeper. It may be a phrase that he employs,

a gesture, an attitude, some queer telepathic message from his eyes; but in that instant we realise that we know our man for the first time. All our values concerning him become readjusted from that moment.

There came such a moment to me when Lydgate and I were in our last term at Stoneleigh. I remember the moment vividly. It was after our inter-house football match, in which Lydgate had played very well—far above his average. Our Housemaster, who was a very popular man, ran up and, slapping Johnny on the back, called out: “Bravo, Lydgate! Bravo, bravo!” As he turned away I saw my school chum look up at the sky and a queer expression came over his face, a kind of drunken egoism, and I suddenly thought to myself:

“So *that* is Johnny Lydgate, after all! And I thought I knew——”

For a time after leaving school we lost touch with each other. Boys are very apt to make vows of eternal friendship, and then—well, other things happen along. Writing is such a fag.

Johnny went to Paris to study art, whilst I walked the hospitals. However, he had not been in Paris for a year—he only wrote to me once!—when his father died. As may be imagined, a man who specialises in homing pigeons and anthologies does not leave a fortune. The Lydgate family found themselves in distressed circumstances. Lydgate was recalled from Paris, and had to do something immediately to earn money.

He took the position manfully, and with that cheery good-humour that was characteristic of him. He obtained a place as an assistant to a firm of decorative designers, hoping that his meagre training might be of some assistance. His remuneration was, naturally, quite nominal, but the firm held out prospects of rapid advance-

ment. He stayed with this firm for seven years, and gave no evidence of special ability. He jogged along stolidly, learning to make pleasant, undistinguished designs for wall-papers, cretonnes, and furniture. He was very popular in the studio, where he worked, on account of his unfailing good-humour, unselfishness, and gift of fun. He distinguished himself most by making caricatures of his colleagues, and imitating their voices and mannerisms. He displayed no particular ambitions, other than to jog along, and have as good a time as his limited income would allow.

We saw each other occasionally, and when I at last got my degrees I bought a practice in West Kensington, not far from where Lydgate had his rooms. He was at that time earning three hundred a year.

The house I had taken was a tall, gaunt place in an inconspicuous street. I was unmarried, and the place was obviously too large for my requirements. So I had the inspiration to suggest to Lydgate that he should occupy the upper part, and pay me whatever he was paying for his diggings. He accepted my offer with alacrity. His mother and sisters were still living in the country.

The arrangement was full of promise. We had great fun arranging, furnishing, and decorating the rooms. Lydgate spent his evenings and Sundays doing all his own painting and decorating, and he also insisted on doing mine.

I was not convinced that the delicate scheme of greys which he evolved for my consulting-room, with its frieze of stencilled peacocks and yew-trees, was quite in keeping with the dignity of my bold brass plate on the front door, but then I knew nothing about art, and Lydgate was so kind in the matter that I let it pass. I had a boy to open the door, and an old woman kept the place reason-

ably clean, and she used to cook us an evening meal, which we had together.

That was a very happy time for both of us, and it lasted some years. My brass plate did not seem to impress the neighbourhood as I should have liked. Sometimes when I opened the door to people they used to ask for the doctor. I once attended Lydgate when he had a feverish chill, and he said my bedside manners were appalling. But gradually it got about that young Dr. Berners was not such a fool as you might imagine. Some said that he was a fairly good, straight, sensible doctor, who took trouble with his patients. At the end of the first year the practice began to show signs of developing.

It was at this time that Lydgate had an affair with a married ballad-singer. I could never quite get to the root of the matter. Neither could I understand his infatuation. She was a fair, plump person, with magnificent neck and shoulders, a brilliantly clear but unsympathetic voice, and an almost unique gift of self-concentration. She had this wonderful voice, but she knew nothing, not even about music. She used to wear tiny paste diamonds early in the morning, and a shiny vegetable silk jumper which made her person appear even more capacious than it really was. Her name was Betty Brandt, and she had a husband who travelled in automobile accessories.

As I say, I do not know the details of this regrettable affair. I only know that it was very passionate, rather involved, and it went on for nearly six months. At the end of that time something happened. Whether they quarrelled, or whether the traveller in automobile accessories intervened, I cannot say. But Johnny Lydgate was desperately unhappy. He sulked and moped and would not go out, except backwards and forwards to his work. And then, one day, he did not even go to that. He told

me surlily that he had left. He gave no reason. He sat about at home, and apparently drowned his sorrow in charcoal and water-colours. He sketched and drew all day, things which he said he never got an opportunity of doing at "that confounded shop." I thought it as well to leave him alone. He paid his rent the first week, and then he asked me for credit, which I naturally acceded.

One Sunday morning I went up to his room, and found the walls covered with drawings and sketches. In my poor opinion they seemed to be a brilliant advance on anything he had done before. I said so, and he seemed pleased, and announced that he was going to hawk his work around to editors, and try to start up on his own. I wished him the best of luck.

At the end of a fortnight his campaign had apparently met with a fair measure of success. He told me he had some commissions and he hoped soon to be able to let me have some money. The next morning he came into the dining-room. His face was crinkled with suppressed laughter, his eyes brilliant with exultant glee. He unfolded a drawing and held it up on the wall. It was a caricature of Betty Brandt!

It was the most brilliant and, at the same time, the cruellest thing I have ever seen. It was no portraiture, but you could not mistake it. I had never liked Betty Brandt, and I was on the point of protesting, and then the realisation that this drawing, in any case, meant the end of the Betty affair gave me such a feeling of relief that I laughed almost hysterically. Johnny and I stood side by side, laughing till the tears rolled down our cheeks. Poor Betty!

He seemed freer after that, and worked assiduously at the orders he had in hand. I am afraid they were not very remunerative. It was a long time before he

proffered any further contribution towards the upkeep of our establishment, and when he did so, it was with many groans and apologies for the smallness of the amount. I told him that he was not to worry about it; my practice was beginning to pay fairly well, and it made a great difference to me to have a companion.

For a year I observed Lydgate's grim struggle with his artistic conscience. The point was that for the work he wanted to do there was no demand. But there was work which he could do for which there was a demand. The latter gradually absorbed his energies. He refused to sponge on me. In eighteen months' time he had wiped out all debts and was beginning to make headway. He appeared to have resigned himself to a life of steady toil. I found him particularly companionable at that time. I think the Betty Brandt affair had done him good. He was calmer, quicker in his sympathies, more tolerant and reflective. He still had his moments of gay fun; his capacity for fooling was enlarged, his perceptions and discernments were more incisive.

When I was thirty and Lydgate twenty-nine we both seemed to have settled down to a solid professional life. He was making five or six hundred a year, and had even saved a little. I was making rather more, and we had improved the conditions of our household. We now had a "general," as well as a charwoman and a page-boy. On occasions we actually entertained, bought reserved seats for the theatre, went away for week-end jaunts.

And then, without any ostentatious forewarning, Viola appeared upon the scene. She glided into our lives with the inevitableness of a portent in a Greek drama. She had occupied her place upon the stage before we had realised the significance of her entrance. She was the daughter of an old fellow-practitioner, a Dr. Brayscott,

with whom I had been on friendly terms, and who had been extremely kind to me when I started my practice. His wife was dead, but he and his daughter lived two streets away, and we indulged in those little social amenities which busy professional people always seem to find time for—occasional dinners, a game of bridge, a little music. Viola sang divinely. I was, of course, the first to meet her, and I sang her praises to such good purpose that Lydgate would not rest until he met her. And then, of course, our little trouble began.

There never was a gentler, fairer, more adorable woman than Viola Brayscott. She brought into a room a feeling of complete tranquillity, warmed with the sun-kissed humours of virginal youth, seeking for ever surprise and revelations, giving out love and sympathy and drawing it to herself.

I cannot tell you of the agony and ecstasy of those months that followed. She visited us sometimes with her father, sometimes alone. We visited her, sometimes together and sometimes alone. It took some weeks to realise that we both adored her. What was to happen? Well, I think we played the game fairly. Each knew of the other's infatuation. It was a fair field and no favour. One does learn something, after all, at an English public school. We bore each other no animosity. We took no unfair advantages.

And what of Viola? For some time the pendulum appeared to swing backwards and forwards. There was no gainsaying the fact that she was really fond of both of us. But the pendulum of that tenderer passion does not swing backwards and forwards. It has a bias, a rhythm of its own. And we each knew that the day would come when the pendulum would not swing back to one of us.

Heigho ! I need hardly tell you the outcome of this contest—you will have foreseen it already. In the social arena, when Lydgate chose to shine, I was no match for him. He had all the advantages of good looks, engaging manners, and that genius for always being at his best in her presence. He shone and sparkled and glowed, whilst I sat dumb and dour and angry with myself. I could not be surprised when the pendulum swung his way and did not return to me.

They got married the following spring, and after a honeymoon in Brittany, went to live in a flat at Barnes. We visited each other occasionally, and the complete success of their union emphasised the loneliness of my own dismal household. They were devoted to each other, and bewilderingly happy.

When the possessive sense is outraged, work is our only friend and physician. I worked and worked and worked, and the practice grew. But, oh, the emptiness of those waking hours !

The following year they had a child, a boy, with those lustre-blue eyes of the father. Their happiness appeared complete.

Lydgate was still doing reasonably well at what he called his "solid commercial stuff." He seemed to have put all other ambitions behind him. As a social problem I would have wagered that there would be nothing more to solve concerning him—in short, that he was going to "settle down and live happily ever afterwards."

But the face of the Sphinx is inscrutable.

It all occurred so surprisingly suddenly. I believe its first inception came about through a caricature he did of Mr. Balfour. Mr. Balfour is an easy person to caricature, and this was not one of Lydgate's best; but the drawing was published in a weekly, and attracted the

attention of a well-known Jewish gentleman, who called himself Maurice Loffley, and who dealt in other people's brains. He asked to see some of Lydgate's work, and he admired extravagantly, especially the caricature of Betty Brandt; but he said:

"My boy, it's celebrities we want. Famous people. Do some, and I'll place them for you."

The outcome was not immediately successful. Lydgate did do some, and some of them were placed; but Mr. Loffley was not very satisfactory over his business arrangements, and Lydgate ended up by doing a caricature of Mr. Loffley himself, which was the best and cruellest thing he had turned out since Betty. It was published in another illustrated weekly, and caused joy to all of Mr. Loffley's colleagues and rivals.

The success of this rapidly led to others. Apart from his skill as a draughtsman, Lydgate had a keen wit and an adroit gift of literary exposition. He worked out some wonderful gibes at various famous people. His drawings began to be talked about, and to be in demand by editors and publishers. Their commercial value rose in direct ratio.

Barely six months after the incident of Mr. Loffley—could his name possibly have been Moritz Loeffler?—Johnny Lydgate had a one-man show at the Regent Galleries. The exhibition was a most remarkable success. A publisher bought the copyright of the entire collection right out, and nearly all the originals were sold at high prices. The Press came out with headlines about the discovery of a new satirist. Artists and Society people flocked to see the exhibition.

On the Saturday afternoon following the opening I was in the galleries, talking to Johnny and his wife and Mr. Burrows, the owner of the galleries. They were all

flushed and excited, and Viola was looking proud and very pretty.

Suddenly Mr. Burrows dived across the room and returned with a tall, striking-looking girl. I did not hear Mr. Burrows introduce her, but, of course, I knew her well by sight. She was a very famous and intellectual woman, the daughter of one of His Majesty's Ministers. Her photograph was always gracing the illustrated papers. I saw her shake Johnny's hand, and then I heard her deep contralto voice exclaim with feeling:

"Oh, Mr. Lydgate, I'm so pleased to make your acquaintance. I think your drawings are simply gorgeous!"

I could not hear Johnny's reply. They talked for several minutes, and she passed on. And then I saw him stagger forward a few steps and look up at the skylight.

My mind immediately reverted to a certain fateful moment at Stoneleigh, on that spring day after the inter-house match, when he was congratulated on his fine play, and I saw upon his face the identical expression. He was like a man dazed and drunken with the riches of his own ego. Instead of the open field and the cheering boys, he was swaying under the narcotic of a more pervading flattery—brilliant and clever people, the faint perfume of richly-dressed women, admiring and significant glances. "That is he! That's Lydgate—Lydgate himself!"

The beautiful and merciless lady—success—had begun to put her spell on him.

What astonished me was the rapidity with which the poison worked. Within a few months he became a celebrity. He was just thirty-three, at the very fullness of his powers. His popularity was no doubt greatly accelerated by the charm of his personality, his good looks, genial manners, and quaint humour.

He was immediately "taken up" by a certain Lady Stradling, a wealthy and adventurous American woman, who adored lions. One invitation led to another. He was always out at some dinner or reception. He developed the club manner. He joined several bohemian clubs, where he became extremely popular. He would give an entertainment at a drawing-board, making caricatures of people present and keeping up a running fire of most amusing chatter. He began to live extravagantly, but even then he was making more money than he could spend.

At first Viola entered with zest into these manifestations of social advancement. She accompanied him to many dinners and functions, but gradually they began to pall upon her, and she let him go by himself.

I remember meeting him one night, the following winter, at the Wombats Club. I was enormously impressed by the change in him. I was there when he arrived, and I saw him enter the room. He was still good-looking, but his face had become looser, and a little coarser. He was greeted by cries of "Hallo, Johnny! Good old Johnny!" "Who is that?" "Don't you know? That's Lydgate—Johnny Lydgate!" He tried to appear impervious to these manifestations, but at the back of his eye I could detect the slow, greedy satisfaction of the man whose cup of happiness is overflowing. He spoke to me pleasantly, but his eyes wandered, seeking distinguished names and faces. He was not particularly proud at being seen in conversation with a suburban doctor.

"Who is that? Ah, excuse me, old chap; I want a word with Edwin Wray. Hallo, Wray, old boy!"

Of course, Edwin Wray is familiar to you? You may see his picture on all the hoardings—the famous comedian. Old boy! Good old boy!

Later, Johnny did one of his inimitable sketches—a

huge success, a wonderful hit at Edwin Wray. Afterwards he sat at a table near me, drinking rum-and-water. He had developed a rather affected style of dress with a voluminous blue and white stock, and peg-top trousers. Occasionally he made a note in a sketch-book, or flung an epigram at a neighbour.

The din of the club increased. It was difficult to see across the room for smoke. And suddenly I thought of Viola. Was he neglecting her? Was he cruel to her?

It was very late when I took my departure, and I was crazy to say something to him. I did indeed manage to mumble something to him about this kind of life being bad for one's nervous energies. He took another sip of rum and said :

"It's a lovely life, old boy—a lovely life!" I left him there.

The memory of that evening disturbed me. I felt that my position as an old friend justified me in indulging some course of interference. A few days later I called, and found Viola alone. I thought she seemed a little abstracted and self-conscious with me. We talked of indifferent things, and then I blurted out :

"I think Johnny is having too many late nights. He didn't look well the other evening."

She bit her lip and said nothing. Suddenly she rose, pressed my arm, and turned away. She was crying. I went up to her.

"Tell me, Viola, is anything wrong?" She dabbed her eyes.

"No, no—oh, no; it's only that he—it's just what you say. Too many late nights, and sometimes he drinks too much, and has headaches and is sullen; there's nothing else, Tom. He loves me as much as ever, I am certain. He hasn't the strength, that's all !"

Oh, the beautiful, merciless lady ! She took nearly three years to destroy my friend. You may say that drink was the cause of his ultimate downfall. Drink certainly accelerated it, but it was not the basic cause. He was drunk before he began to drink—drunk with the rich wine of her charms.

Have you ever seen a man destroyed in that way? The spectacle is not edifying. He went rapidly from bad to worse. The miracle is how he retained his powers as a draughtsman almost to the end. From a pleasant, good-looking young man he developed into a puffy, distinguished-looking Georgian roué. The world spoiled him, and he hadn't the strength to stand up against it. The standards of morality and behaviour which these other men set up did not apply to Johnny Lydgate. Oh, dear, no ! He was above it all, a thing apart, a genius, the observed of all observers. Sometimes he would be out all night. Sometimes he would be lost for days together. Then he would turn up, be very ill, and go to bed. Viola would minister to him, and give him hot-water bottles. And he would cry and become maudlin. He would swear not to do it again. He loved her—oh, how he loved her !

And she would stroke his temple and whisper :

"Strength, dear, strength. You must try. Oh, you must try, for my sake !"

Of course he would try. How ill he felt ! And the days passed, and his physical strength returned to him. Came also the little whispers of the outside world. An invitation to Lady Stradling's; telephone messages from anxious publishers; the sale of two water-colours at a record price; the house dinner at the Wombats Club. Just this once—oh, just this once, Viola !

Back he went, lost to the claims of common decency.

His face became lined and blotchy. He trembled in his movements; the veins in his arms and his hands stood out like knotted cords.

To the very end she tended him, shielded him, mothered him, and fought for him. The world will never know what that woman suffered and endured. She says that he was never cruel to her, except by his neglect and lack of consideration. In his behaviour towards her he was always tender and passionate, contrite, disgusted with himself. He knew quite well what he was doing. It was not that he loved Viola any the less, but that he was clay in the hands of that more powerful mistress—the glamour of publicity, to be talked about, to be pointed at, to be praised in the Press.

Dr. Brayscott and I did what we could. We advised and argued and cajoled and even bullied. He had other real friends, too. Everybody did what they could, but it was of no avail. When he sank into that last illness from which he never recovered, I visited him one day, and sat regarding the spectacle of “that unmatched form and feature of blown youth, blasted with ecstasy.” He opened his eyes and looked at me. He gave me a quick glance of apprehension. Suddenly he smiled in his old way and whispered:

“It was worth while, old boy!”

Some men are made that way. They must crowd their life into a capsule and swallow it. They know they are wooing destruction, and it is “worth while.” Not for them the steady rhythm of an ordered life. The beautiful, merciless lady pipes the tune and they must dance.

.

In spite of all, Johnny Lydgate remains a precious and endearing memory to us—to Viola and me. When I

married her, two years after his death, we went abroad for awhile, and on our return I acquired a practice at Knayling, on the Sussex downs, and there we built our home. The boy is a perfect joy to us. He has his father's eyes and vivacious manners, and something of his mother's warmth and tenderness. The study of his welfare and training is a constant source of affectionate discussion. What will he become? What lies before him? We are full of hope and tremulous surmises. Only at times do the old doubts and fears assail us. He is twenty now, and next term he leaves Cambridge. On this desk, as I write, there is a letter from him, written to his mother:

"Mother dear,—What is all this about the Indian Civil Service? I should simply hate it. Fancy seeing all one's life in perspective! Knowing exactly how much you will be earning when you're forty-five; knowing that you'll get a pension when you're sixty or seventy, or whenever it is. Who cares what happens when they are seventy! No, old thing. Tony Stevens is going to Paris to study Art. I think I should like to join him. You know I can draw, don't you? Smithers thinks my life studies are pretty useful. I have a feeling I might do well. Anyway we'll talk it over when I come down. Crowds of love, mother dear.

"Your loving
"SON."

And I sit here, turning it over and biting my pen. He has his father's lustre-blue eyes. How would you answer this letter? Can one advise the young?



J. D. BERESFORD

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J. D. BERESFORD

THE CRIMINAL

I

THE INDICTMENT

THE attitude of the public, freely expressed, was that of the outraged. Casual persons of benevolent aspect were heard to express regret that the methods of the Inquisition, as described by Poe, were no longer permissible in England. The cry for revenge was everywhere the dominant expression; none could doubt that mere death, "gentle, delicate death," was no punishment at all. Even convinced Calvinists, who could find sweet comfort in the thought that the man would burn eternally in hell, avowed, nevertheless, that they would like to see him burned first in this world. The undoubted evidence of scorched and shrinking nerves would afford greater satisfaction, one inferred, than the purely imaginative pleasure derived from the contemplation of a non-physical body being continually burnt and never consumed—like asbestos in a gas-fire, perhaps. In this material life we naturally seek to reach a consummation; in this case a climax of agony; or, to prolong the punishment with some alternation of rest to emphasise the limit of torture. It was impossible to avoid the conclusion that monotony would in time produce indifference; even the monotony of an unimaginable number of degrees centigrade above boiling point.

The whole civilisation of Christendom, indeed, rang with a great cry for revenge. Journals of every creed and shade of opinion flouted law and justice, with comments on the untried case that hanged the man by suggestion a dozen times a week. Only one relatively obscure daily was hauled up for contempt of court and fined ten pounds—an example, doubtless, to advertise that in England, at least, justice could never be swayed by popular feeling.

The case touched the people so nearly. There was not an individual who had suffered at the hands of some criminal, or had known a friend or relation, however distant, who had so suffered, but was able to claim that he or she had a personal interest in the trial.

For this man was no common murderer, robber, or seducer, he was the arch-criminal, the very creator of crime; the instigator of Heaven knew how many dastardly outrages upon life and property; the hidden source of evil that lay snug in the heart of civilisation and sent forth his trained emissaries throughout Christendom to kill and plunder. The number of deaths for which this man had been responsible was incalculable. Little wonder that the very churches cried, "Crucify him!" Little wonder that he had to be protected night and day by a special military guard, to save him from the instant vengeance of the outraged.

Yet while so much was known of the man, such a perplexing confusion of minutiae—the revolting detail of his dastardly life—there had been one strange reservation which added a touch of pique and mystery to the trial. No one could give reliable information concerning his personal appearance. He had been so hedged and guarded since his capture, so sheltered by regulation and restriction from the revengeful curious, that no member of the

public had seen his face. And no sketch or photograph of him had been permitted during the magisterial proceedings, which had been brief, unannounced, and practically conducted *in camera*. The high authorities feared a great scandal. Even the English public was, for once, delirious. Our great boast of reserve and self-control was in danger of being overthrown by the terrible spectacle of mob-justice. Authority was determined that this man should have fair and open trial at the hands of twelve intelligent fellow-countrymen—his brothers in blood—directed by the keen, forensic mind of a judge of the High Court. No hint of savagery should stain the record of twentieth-century Britain; the instrument of justice should be as finely adjusted to the trial of this arch-criminal as to the trial of every other prisoner who had ever appeared, guarded and frowned upon, in the awful dock reserved for the hypothetically innocent.

Absurd in such a case, no doubt, was this large parade of justice. There was not a member of the whole community who would have hesitated to pass sentence upon the criminal without the production of one further title of evidence. It was said that he was a murderer of murderers, that his very emissaries had been foully put away by the man's own hand. It was said that a full indictment of his offences against the law would take a day in the recital. It was said that there was not a crime in the calendar which this man had not either instigated or committed in person.

There was no safety in Christendom while the man remained alive. He was a menace to the organised, peace-loving, police-protected community; a menace alike to patient labour, diligent middle class, intelligent ownership, and privileged aristocracy. . . .

A few people, cranks and nonentities, did not join in

the great cry for revenge. But we were compelled to conceal our opinions like pro-Germans in Paris during the siege, or like pro-Boers in London during the celebrations that commemorated the relief of Mafeking. We realised that to air our opinions during the trial would serve no purpose; we were as little able to alter the opinion of Christendom at that time, as we were able to fill up the Atlantic by throwing sand into it.

Personally, I had not the least desire to turn évangel. I have long been a convert to the principle of the open mind, a principle which *ex hypothesi* forbids any attempt to set up a standard and maintain that there is none other—the essential preliminary for the serious propagandist.

Hemming (another convert) and I have worked out the philosophy of the open mind to our complete satisfaction, and the main position is easily grasped, namely, that in this world of mutually subversive propositions there can be no affirmation without denial; and as denial is inconsistent with the theory of the open mind, we do not affirm. The converse of this proposition is also true, a fact which strengthens our logic, but is not otherwise of immediate value to us.

This reference to the principle which Hemming and I have adopted is essential to the understanding of our attitude towards the greatest criminal in the world's history, this man who was said to be responsible for more deaths than Napoleon or the controllers of the American markets. (Nevertheless, his success as a robber was in no way comparable to that of these great exemplars, since he had been compelled, by adopting other methods, to rely upon cunning rather than upon *force majeure*.)

For while our major premiss debar us from subsequent affirmation, we are constantly stimulated to an active curiosity, and in this case our curiosity was chiefly, if not

entirely, concerned with the *appearance* of the arch-criminal—the one feature which, as yet, had not been decided by popular opinion.

This curiosity was by no means easy to satisfy.

The accommodation provided by the galleries had been cut down to the narrowest limit, and although nominally the public was able to gain admission, we soon found that, as a matter of fact, nearly every seat was occupied by privileged persons, before the door to the public gallery was opened. On the first morning of the trial, only the first ten individuals of the hundreds who made up the long queue were admitted, and Hemming and I had a shrewd suspicion that all of them were plain-clothes policemen who had been stationed there Heaven knows how many weary hours before.

In view of the astonishing experience of Hemming and myself, it must ever remain subject for regret that this trial was for all intents and purposes conducted *in camera*. For instance, only six news reporters were officially admitted, though it is probable that the proprietors or editors of the chief journals were allowed to occupy some of the (illegally?) reserved seats. I say this is probable because there was a conspiracy of silence in the Press concerning the exclusion of the public (Hemming and I wrote several letters on the subject, but none of them was published), and it seems to me unlikely that in this country the Press would have forborne to comment on such an open scandal had not newspaper owners and editors been fully satisfied as to the propriety of the proceedings.

Our chief regret is that during the whole trial no sketches or photographs of the prisoner were published, for these would have furnished evidence which would either have corroborated or disproved the almost incredible testimony of Hemming and myself.

II

THE TRIAL

Our first defeat in no way discouraged us; we had been prepared to encounter difficulties. We now decided to work separately, and the method proposed for myself this first day, was to obtain an interview with some privileged spectator of the proceedings, preferably with some individual who was known to me personally.

I returned to the Old Bailey shortly before the Court closed, and found an immense crowd thronging the precincts of the building. I joined this crowd, and presently had the good fortune to see a man I knew come out of the Court—a certain Geoffrey Gatling, a very promising junior at the Criminal Bar.

I made no attempt to attract his attention in that place, but made my way down to Ludgate Hill, and so on to the Temple. I found Gatling had returned to his chambers when I arrived at Paper Buildings.

Gatling is of the type we instinctively associate with the legal profession; thin, narrow-faced, hawk-nosed, with rather close-set eyes and prominent chin—it is, also, the decaying type of American where the pseudo-Indian features that seemed to spring up in the white races as a result of the climatic and topographical conditions are now giving place to a more distinctive characteristic.

Gatling had thrown off his wig and gown when I entered his room, and was smoking a cigarette.

We talked for a few moments on indifferent subjects, and then Gatling said, "I suppose you want me to get you admission to the Court to-morrow? I can't do it, my dear fellow. It's quite doubtful whether I shall be able to get in myself."

"You were there to-day," I said, and in answer to his question, explained how I had obtained that knowledge. "But I didn't expect you would be able to get me in," I went on; "I merely came here to indulge my curiosity. Answer one question, and I'll leave you to your work."

"I *am* rather busy," remarked Gatling.

"Well, just tell me what the prisoner looks like," I said. "Describe his appearance. I have been having a tremendous argument with Hemming about it."

"It's a type," returned Gatling with a shrug. "If you are looking for some intellectual monstrosity, you'll be disappointed. He's simply a great hulking brute, with a low, narrow forehead, a button nose, and a huge jowl."

"Great Heavens!" I ejaculated, "you don't say so? Are you perfectly certain? The man who kept dark so long, and wove such subtle schemes?"

"My dear chap, of course I'm certain," replied Gatling with a touch of temper. "I had plenty of opportunity to study him to-day, I assure you."

I went home, a thoughtful man; thankful, nevertheless, that I was not bigoted, that I could accept this portrait of the criminal, a portrait so completely unlike the mental image I had framed. . . .

After dinner Hemming came in, and threw himself dejectedly into an arm-chair.

"No luck?" I asked.

"Oh! yes," he said, "I got hold of Gunston, the editor of the *Daily Post*; I thought he'd be there. You know the chap, don't you, a great square-faced block of a fellow?"

"And the criminal is . . . ?" I began, intending to anticipate Hemming's description.

"Oh! the criminal," interrupted Hemming, "is a dis-

appointment, a little rat-faced chap, the usual type of the city degenerate—a weasel.”

“What ? ” I shouted.

Hemming shrugged his shoulders. “Of course, you are surprised,” he said, “*I* was. . . .”

“The criminal,” I said, “according to Gatling, is a cross between a gorilla and a prize-fighter.”

“Between a ferret and a gutter-snipe, according to Gunston,” corrected Hemming.

“Which of them was lying, do you suppose?” I asked.

“We must get to the bottom of this,” said Hemming.

III

THE VERDICT

We worked indefatigably all that week and accumulated many descriptions. Some of them agreed on broad lines, and the bulk of evidence was in favour of one of the two types indicated by Gatling and Gunston. Among the divergences, however, were some that deserve to be recorded. Deane-Elmer, that amateur scientist of many attainments—incidentally criminology—described the prisoner as probably an Armenian Jew; of brilliant intellect, but entirely lacking in any moral sense; he told me that the man’s protuberant eyes and weak eyebrows were the most indicative marks of the criminal. Professor Molyneux was very vague in his description of the man’s physiognomy, but told Hemming that the cranial index—85.6; remarkably brachycephalic—fully upheld the professor’s theory as enunciated in his great monograph, “Craniology in Relation to Crime.” Otho Jennings, the author of so many works published by the Rationalist Press, told me that the criminal was a fanatic and bore all

the usual sign-marks—high, narrow forehead; pale blue eyes with a small, steady iris; thin-lipped mouth; well-cut features and high cheek-bones. Street, the poet, said that the man was like a cinquecento Christ, with sad, dark eyes and a sensitive mouth. . . .

"They can't all be lying," remarked Hemming when we met to collate this evidence.

"I must confess that the thing is beyond me," I replied. "But I thank Heaven, nevertheless, that we adopted the principle of the open mind."

The trial was being prolonged, most unnecessarily according to some critics, but the authorities were agreed that impartial justice must be administered; all the evidence was sifted meticulously by the counsel for the defence in his cross-examination of witnesses—and at the end of the first week Hemming proposed a scheme which should resolve our doubts.

The scheme was a risky one, and need not be described at length here; briefly, Hemming heavily bribed a news-agency reporter, occupied his place in Court for half an hour, and at great risk of imprisonment for contempt, concealed a small camera under the disguise. The reporter was a fat man with a large stomach, and the camera was hidden in this part of Hemming's anatomy, the lens appearing as a button. Three crowded days were spent by Hemming in perfecting the mechanical details. He collaborated with a theatrical costumier, who made up Hemming to resemble the agency man whose place he was taking. It was a bold scheme, and it worked to perfection.

I met Hemming outside the Court, and we went off at once to develop the three films he had been able to expose.

On the way I questioned Hemming as to his own impressions of the appearance of the criminal; but his

answers were very vague. He said that he did not wish to prejudice me; that when the plates were developed I should be able to form my own opinion, and he wanted to see if it agreed with his own. The only approach to a description I received from him was that the criminal was "a very ordinary looking person, just like you and me."

The photographs had been taken about half-past eleven o'clock, and the light, fortunately, had been strong enough for Hemming to obtain good negatives.

I shall never forget our eagerness as we diligently rocked those three films and saw the little black specks springing up, evidence that Hemming had got some result.

After the fixing bath, we just brushed the films with water and hurried out to the light.

Hemming had been seated some distance from the dock, and there was a good deal of detail on each film; the faces of people in the gallery behind, the tops of counsels' wigs in the foreground; in the centre the dock with the figures of two policemen at the back of it. . . .

But there was no trace of the figure of the criminal.

Save for the two policemen the dock was empty.

Neither Hemming nor I can offer any explanation. He is quite certain that the criminal was in the dock when the film was exposed; he could see him if the camera could not.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty on the first count—one of murder—without leaving the box.

Only twelve signatures could be obtained to a petition to the Home Secretary, begging for a commutation of the sentence.

According to the newspaper reports, the man was hanged.



ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

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ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

THE TRYST

As he got out of the train at the little wayside station he remembered the conversation as if it had been yesterday, instead of fifteen years ago—and his heart went thumping against his ribs so violently that he almost heard it. The original thrill came over him again with all its infinite yearning. He felt it as he had felt it *then*—not with that tragic lessening the interval had brought to each repetition of its memory. Here, in the familiar scenery of its birth, he realised with mingled pain and wonder that the subsequent years had not destroyed, but only dimmed it. The forgotten rapture flamed back with all the fierce beauty of its genesis, desire at white heat. And the shock of the abrupt discovery shattered time. Fifteen years became a negligible moment; the crowded experiences that had intervened seemed but a dream. The farewell scene, the conversation on the steamer's deck, were clear as of the day before. He saw the hand holding her big hat that fluttered in the wind, saw the flowers on the dress where the long coat was blown open a moment, recalled the face of a hurrying steward who had jostled them; he even heard the voices—his own and hers:

“Yes,” she said simply; “I promise you. You have my word. I’ll wait——”

“Till I come back,” he interrupted.

Steadfastly she repeated his actual words, then added: "Here; at home—that is."

"I'll come to the garden gate as usual," he told her, trying to smile. "I'll knock. You'll open the gate—as usual—and come out to me."

These words, too, she attempted to repeat, but her voice failed, her eyes filled suddenly with tears; she looked into his face and smiled. It was just then that her little hand went up to hold the hat on—he saw the very gesture still. He remembered that he was vehemently tempted to tear his ticket up there and then, to go ashore with her, to stay in England, to brave all opposition—when the siren roared its third horrible warning . . . and the ship put out to sea.

Fifteen years, thick with various incident, had passed between them since that moment. His life had risen, fallen, crashed, then risen again. He had come back at last, fortune won by a lucky coup—at thirty-five; had come back to find her, come back, above all, to keep his word. Once every three months they had exchanged the brief letter agreed upon: "I am well; I am waiting; I am happy; I am unmarried. Yours ——." For his youthful wisdom had insisted that no "man" had the right to keep "any woman" too long waiting; and she, thinking that letter brave and splendid, had insisted likewise that he was free—if freedom called him. They had laughed over this last phrase in their agreement. They put five years as the possible limit of separation. By then he would have won success, and obstinate parents would have nothing more to say.

But when the five years ended he was "on his uppers" in a western mining town, and with the end of ten in sight those uppers, though changed, were little better, apparently, than patched and mended. It was just then,

too, that the change which had been stealing over him first betrayed itself. He realised it abruptly, a sense of shame and horror in him. The discovery was made unconsciously: it disclosed itself. He was reading her letter as a labourer on a Californian fruit farm: "Funny she doesn't marry—someone else!" he heard himself say. The words were out before he knew it, and certainly before he could suppress them. They just slipped out, startling him into the truth; and he knew instantly that the thought was fathered in him by a hidden wish. . . . He was older. He had lived. It was but a memory he loved.

Despising himself in a contradictory fashion—both vaguely and fiercely—he yet held true to his boyhood's promise. He did not write and offer to release her as he knew they did in stories; he persuaded himself that he meant to keep his word. There was this fine, stupid, selfish obstinacy in his character. In any case, she would misunderstand and think he wanted to set free—himself. "Besides—I'm still—awfully fond of her," he asserted. And it was true; only the love, it seemed, had gone its way. Not that another woman took it; he kept himself clean, held firm as steel. The love, apparently, just faded of its own accord; her image dimmed, her letters had ceased to thrill, then ceased to interest him.

Subsequent reflection made him realise other details about himself. In the interval he had suffered hardships, had learned the uncertainty of life that depends for its continuance on a little food, but that food often hard to come by, and had seen so many others go under that he held it more cheaply than of old. The wandering instinct, too, had caught him, slowly killing the domestic impulse; he lost his desire for a settled place of abode, the desire for children of his own, lost the desire to marry

at all. Also—he reminded himself with a smile—he had lost other things: the expression of youth *she* was accustomed to and held always in her thoughts of him, two fingers of one hand, his hair! He wore glasses, too. The gentlemen-adventurers of life get scarred in those wild places where he lived. He saw himself a rather battered specimen well on the way to middle age.

There was confusion in his mind, however, *and* in his heart: a struggling complex of emotions that made it difficult to know exactly what he did feel. The dominant clue concealed itself. Feelings shifted. A single, clear determinant did not offer. He was an honest fellow. “I can’t quite make it out,” he said. “What is it I really feel? And why?” His motive seemed obscured. To keep the flame alight for ten long buffeting years was no small achievement; better men had succumbed in half the time. Yet something in him still held fast to the girl as with a band of steel that *would* not let her go entirely. Occasionally there came strong reversions, when he ached with longing, yearning, hope; when he loved her again; remembered passionately each detail of the far-off courtship days in the forbidden rectory garden beyond the small, white garden gate. Or was it merely the image and the memory he loved “again”? He hardly knew himself. He could not tell. That “again” puzzled him. It was the wrong word, surely. . . . He still wrote the promised letter, however; it was so easy; those short sentences could not betray the dead or dying fires. One day, besides, he would return and claim her. He meant to keep his word.

And he had kept it. Here he was, this calm September afternoon, within three miles of the village where he first had kissed her, where the marvel of first love had come to both; three short miles between him and the little white garden gate of which at this very moment she was

intently thinking, and behind which some fifty minutes later she would be standing, waiting for him. . . .

He had purposely left the train at an earlier station; he would walk the three miles in the dusk, climb the familiar steps, knock at the white gate in the wall as of old, utter the promised words, "I have come back to find you," enter and—keep his word. He had written from Mexico a week before he sailed; he had made careful, even accurate calculations: "In the dusk, on the sixteenth of September, I shall come and knock," he added to the usual sentences. The knowledge of his coming, therefore, had been in her possession seven days. Just before sailing, moreover, he had heard from her—though not in answer, naturally. She was well; she was happy; she was unmarried; she was waiting.

And now, as by some magical process of restoration—possible to deep hearts only, perhaps, though even to them quite inexplicable—the state of first love had blazed up again in him. In all its radiant beauty it lit his heart, burned unextinguished in his soul, set body and mind on fire. The years had merely veiled it. It burst upon him, captured, overwhelmed him with the suddenness of a dream. He stepped from the train. He met it in the face. It took him prisoner. The familiar trees and hedges, the unchanged countryside, the "field-smells known in infancy," all these, with something subtly added to them, rolled back the passion of his youth upon him in a flood. No longer was he bound upon what he deemed, perhaps, an act of honourable duty; it was love that drove him, as it drove him fifteen years before. And it drove him with the accumulated passion of desire long forcibly repressed; almost as if, out of some fancied notion of fairness to the girl, he had deliberately, yet still unconsciously, said "No" to it; that *she* had not faded,

but that he had decided, "*I must forget her.*" That sentence: "*Why doesn't she marry—someone else?*" had not betrayed change in himself. It surprised another motive: "*It's not fair to—her!*"

His mind worked with a curious rapidity, but worked within one circle only. The stress of sudden emotion was extraordinary. He remembered a thousand things; yet, chief among them, those occasional reversions when he had felt he "*loved her again.*" Had he not, after all, deceived himself? Had she ever really "*faded*" at all? Had he not felt he ought to let her fade—release her that way? And the change in himself?—that sentence on the Californian fruit-farm—what did they mean? Which had been true, the fading or the love?

The confusion in his mind was hopeless, but, as a matter of fact, he did not think at all: he only felt. The momentum, besides, was irresistible, and before the shattering onset of the sweet revival he did not stop to analyse the strange result. He knew certain things, and cared to know no others: that his heart was leaping, his blood running with the heat of twenty, that joy recaptured him, that he must see, hear, touch her, hold her in his arms—and marry her. For the fifteen years had crumbled to a little thing, and at thirty-five he felt himself but twenty, rapturously, deliciously in love.

He went quickly, eagerly, down the little street to the inn, still feeling only, not thinking anything. The vehement uprush of the old emotion made reflection of any kind impossible. He gave no further thought to those long years "*out there,*" when her name, her letters, the very image of her in his mind had found him, if not cold, at least without keen response. All that was forgotten as though it had not been. The steadfast thing in him, this strong holding to a promise which had never

wilted, ousted the recollection of fading and decay that, whatever caused them, certainly had existed. And this steadfast thing now took command. This enduring quality in his character led him. It was only towards the end of the hurried tea he first received the singular impression—vague, indeed, but undeniably persistent—that he was *being* led.

Yet, though aware of this, he did not pause to argue or reflect. The emotional displacement in him, of course, had been more than considerable: there had been upheaval, a change whose abruptness was even dislocating, fundamental in a sense he could not estimate—shock. Yet he took no count of anything but the one mastering desire to get to her as soon as possible, knock at the small, white garden gate, hear her answering voice, see the low wooden door swing open—take her. There was joy and glory in his heart, and a yearning sweet delight. At this very moment she was expecting him. And he—had come.

Behind these positive emotions, however, there lay concealed all the time others that were of a negative character. Consciously, he was not aware of them, but they were there; they revealed their presence in various little ways that puzzled him. He recognised them absent-mindedly, as it were; did not analyse or investigate them. For, through the confusion upon his faculties, rose also a certain hint of insecurity that betrayed itself by a slight hesitancy or miscalculation in one or two unimportant actions. There was a touch of melancholy, too, a sense of something lost. It lay, perhaps, in that tinge of sadness which accompanies the twilight of an autumn day, when a gentler, mournful beauty veils a greater beauty that is past. Some trick of memory connected it with a scene of early boyhood, when, meaning to see the

sunrise, he overslept, and, by a brief half-hour, was just—too late. He noted it merely, then passed on; he did not understand it; he hurried all the more, this hurry the only sign that it *was* noted. “I must be quick,” flashed up across his strongly positive emotions.

And, due to this hurry, possibly, were the slight miscalculations that he made. They were very trivial. He rang for sugar, though the bowl stood just before his eyes, yet when the girl came in he forgot completely what he rang for—and inquired instead about the late trains back to London. And, when the time-table was laid before him, he examined it without intelligence, then looked up suddenly into the maid’s face with a question about flowers. Were there flowers to be had in the village anywhere? What kind of flowers? “Oh, a bouquet or a—he hesitated, searching for a word that tried to present itself, yet was not the word *he* wanted to make use of—“or a wreath—of some sort?” he finished. He took the very word he did not want to take. In several things he did and said, this hesitancy and miscalculation betrayed themselves—such trivial things, yet significant in an elusive way that he disliked. There was sadness, insecurity somewhere in them. And he resented them, though aware of their existence only because they qualified his joy. There was a whispered “No” floating somewhere in the dusk. Almost—he felt disquiet. He hurried, more and more eager to be off upon his journey—the final part of it.

Moreover, there were other signs of an odd miscalculation—dislocation, perhaps, properly speaking—in him. Though the inn was familiar from his boyhood days, kept by the same old couple, too, he volunteered no information about himself, nor asked a single question about the village he was bound for. He did not even inquire if the

rector—her father—still were living. And when he left he entirely neglected the gilt-framed mirror above the mantelpiece of plush, dusty pampas-grass in waterless vases on either side. It did not matter, apparently, whether he looked well or ill, tidy or untidy. He forgot that when his cap was off the absence of thick, accustomed hair must alter him considerably, forgot also that two fingers were missing from one hand, the right hand, the hand that she would presently clasp. Nor did it occur to him that he wore glasses, which must change his expression and add to the appearance of the years he bore. None of these obvious and natural things seemed to come into his thoughts at all. He was in a hurry to be off. He did not think. But, though his mind may not have noted these slight betrayals with actual sentences, his attitude, nevertheless, expressed them. This was, it seemed, the feeling in him: "What could such details matter to her *now*? Why, indeed, should he give to them a single thought? It was himself she loved and waited for, not separate items of his external, physical image." As well think of the fact that she, too, must have altered—outwardly. It never once occurred to him. Such details were of To-day. . . . He was only impatient to come to her quickly, very quickly, instantly, if possible. He hurried.

There was a flood of boyhood's joy in him. He paid for his tea, giving a tip that was twice the price of the meal, and set out gaily and impetuously along the winding lane. Charged to the brim with a sweet picture of a small, white garden gate, the loved face chose behind it, he went forward at a headlong pace, singing "Nancy Lee" as he used to sing it fifteen years before.

With action, then, the negative sensations hid themselves, obliterated by the positive ones that took command,

The former, however, merely lay concealed; they waited. Thus, perhaps, does vital emotion, overlong restrained, denied, indeed, of its blossoming altogether, take revenge. Repressed elements in his psychic life asserted themselves, selecting, as though naturally, a dramatic form.

The dusk fell rapidly, mist rose in floating strips along the meadows by the stream; the old, familiar details beckoned him forwards, then drove him from behind as he went swiftly past them. He recognised others rising through the thickening air beyond; they nodded, peered, and whispered, sometimes they almost sang. And each added to his inner happiness; each brought its sweet and precious contribution, and built it into the reconstructed picture of the earlier, long, forgotten rapture. It was an enticing and enchanted journey that he made, something impossibly blissful in it, something, too, that seemed curiously irresistible.

For the scenery had not altered all these years, the details of the country were unchanged, everything he saw was rich with dear and precious association, increasing the momentum of the tide that carried him along. Yonder was the stile over whose broken step he had helped her yesterday, and there the slippery plank across the stream where she looked above her shoulder to ask for his support; he saw the very bramble bushes where she scratched her hand, a-blackberrying, the day before . . . and, finally, the weather-stained signpost, "To the Rectory." It pointed to the path through the dangerous field where Farmer Sparrow's bull provided such a sweet excuse for holding, leading—protecting her. From the entire landscape rose a steam of recent memory, each incident alive, each little detail brimmed with its cargo of fond association.

He read the rough black lettering on the crooked arm

—it was rather faded, but he knew it too well to miss a single letter—and hurried forward along the muddy track; he looked about him for a sign of Farmer Sparrow's bull; he even felt in the misty air for the little hand, that he might take and lead her into safety. The thought of her drew him on with such irresistible anticipation that it seemed as if the cumulative drive of vanished and unsated years evoked the tangible phantom almost. He actually felt it, soft and warm and clinging in his own, that was no longer incomplete and mutilated.

Yet it was not he who led and guided now, but, more and more, he who was being led. The hint had first betrayed its presence at the inn; it now openly declared itself. It had crossed the frontier into a positive sensation. Its growth, swiftly increasing all this time, had accomplished itself; he had ignored, somehow, both its genesis and quick development; the result he plainly recognised. She was expecting him, indeed, but it was more than expectation; there was calling in it—she summoned him. Her thought and longing reached him along that old, invisible track love builds so easily between true, faithful hearts. All the forces of her being, her very voice, came towards him through the deepening autumn twilight. He had not noticed the curious physical restoration in his hand, but he was vividly aware of this more magical alteration—that *she* led and guided him, drawing him ever more swiftly towards the little, white garden gate where she stood at this very moment, waiting. Her sweet strength compelled him; there was this new touch of something irresistible about the familiar journey, where formerly had been delicious yielding only, shy, tentative advance.

His footsteps hurried faster and ever faster; so deep was the allurements in his blood, he almost ran. He

reached the narrow, winding lane, and raced along it. He knew each bend, each angle of the holly hedge, each separate incident of ditch and stone. He could have plunged blindfold down it at top speed. The familiar perfumes rushed at him—dead leaves and mossy earth and ferns and dock leaves, bringing the bewildering currents of strong emotion in him all together as in a rising wave. He saw, then, the crumbling wall, the cedars topping it with spreading branches, the chimneys of the rectory. On his right bulked the outline of the old, grey church; the twisted, ancient yews, the company of grave-stones, upright and leaning, dotting the ground like listening figures. But he looked at none of these. For, a little beyond, he already saw the five rough steps of stone that led from the lane towards a small, white garden gate. That gate at last shone before him, rising through the misty air. He reached it.

He stopped dead a moment. His heart, it seemed, stopped too, then took to violent hammering in his brain. There was a roaring in his mind, and yet a marvellous silence—just behind it. Then the roar of emotion died away. There was utter stillness. This stillness, silence, was all about him. The world seemed preternaturally quiet.

But the pause was too brief to measure. For the tide of emotion had receded only to come on again with redoubled power. He turned, leaped forward, clambered impetuously up the rough stone steps, and flung himself, breathless and exhausted, against the trivial barrier that stood between his eyes and—hers. In his wild, half violent impatience, however, he stumbled. That roaring, too, confused him. He fell forward, it seemed, for twilight had merged in darkness, and he misjudged the steps, the distances he yet knew so well. For a moment, certainly,

he lay at full length upon the uneven ground against the wall; the steps had tripped him. And then he raised himself and knocked. His right hand struck upon the small, white garden gate. Upon the two lost fingers he felt the impact. "I am here," he cried, with a deep sound in his throat as though utterance was choked and difficult. "I have come back."

For a fraction of a second he waited, while the world stood still and waited with him. But there was no delay. Her answer came at once: "I am well. . . . I am happy. . . . I am waiting."

And the voice was dear and marvellous as of old. Though the words were strange, reminding him of something dreamed, forgotten, lost, it seemed, he did not take special note of them. He only wondered that she did not open instantly that he might see her. Speech could follow, but sight came surely first! There was this lightning-flash of disappointment in him. Ah, she was lengthening out the marvellous moment, as often and often she had done before. It was to tease him that she made him wait. He knocked again; he pushed against the unyielding surface. For he noticed that it was unyielding; and there was a depth in the tender voice that he could not understand.

"Open!" he cried again, but louder than before. "I have come back!" And, as he said it, the mist struck cold against his face.

But her answer froze his blood.

"I cannot open."

And a sudden anguish of despair rose over him; the sound of her voice was strange; in it was faintness, distance as well as depth. It seemed to echo. Something frantic seized him then—the panic sense.

"Open, open! Come out to me!" he tried to shout.

His voice failed oddly; there was no power in it. Something appalling struck him between the eyes. "For God's sake, open. I'm waiting here! Open, and come out to me!"

The reply was muffled by distance that already seemed increasing; he was conscious of freezing cold about him—in his heart:

"I cannot. You must come in to me."

He knew not exactly then what happened, for the cold grew dreadful and the icy mist was in his throat. No words would come. He rose to his knees, and from his knees to his feet. He stooped. With all his force he knocked again; in a blind frenzy of despair he hammered and beat against the unyielding barrier of the small, white garden gate. He battered it till the skin of his knuckles was torn and bleeding—the first two fingers of a hand already mutilated. He remembers the torn and broken skin, for he noticed in the gloom that stains upon the gate bore witness to his violence; it was not till afterwards that he remembered the other fact—that the hand had already suffered mutilation, long, long years ago. The power of sound was feebly in him again; he called aloud; there was no answer. He tried to scream, but the scream was muffled in his throat before it issued properly; it was a nightmare scream. As a last resort he flung himself bodily upon the unyielding gate, with such precipitate violence, moreover, that his face struck against its surface.

From the friction, then, along the whole length of his cheek he knew that the surface was not smooth. Cold and rough that surface was; but also—it was not of wood. Moreover, there was writing on it he had not seen before. How he deciphered it in the gloom, he never knew. The lettering was deeply cut. Perhaps he traced it with his

fingers; his right hand certainly lay stretched upon it. He made out a name, a date, a broken verse from the Bible, and strange words: "*Je suis la première au rendez-vous. Je vous attends.*" The lettering was sharply cut with edges that were new. For the date was of a week ago; the broken verse ran, "When the shadows flee away . . ." and the small, white garden gate was unyielding because it was of—stone.

At the inn he found himself staring at a table from which the tea things had not been cleared away. There was a railway time-table in his hands, and his head was bent forwards over it, trying to decipher the lettering in the growing twilight. Beside him, still fingering a florin, stood the serving-girl; her other hand held a brown tray with a running dog painted upon its dented surface. It swung to and fro a little as she spoke, evidently continuing a conversation her customer had begun. For she was giving information—in the colourless, disinterested voice such persons use:

"We all went to the funeral, sir, all the country people went. The grave was her father's—the family grave. . . ." Then, seeing that her customer was too absorbed in the time-table to listen further, she said no more, but began to pile the tea things on to the tray with noisy clatter.

Ten minutes later, in the road, he stood hesitating. The signal at the station just opposite was already down. The autumn mist was rising. He looked along the winding road that melted away into the distance, then slowly turned and reached the platform just as the London train came in. He felt very old—too old to walk three miles. . . .

MARY BUTTS

SPEED THE PLOUGH

HE lay in bed, lax and staring, and obscure images rose and hung before him, dissolved, reshaped. His great illness passed from him. It left him too faint for any sequence of thought. He lay still, without memory, without hope. Such concrete impressions as came to him were sensuous and centred round the women of the hospital. They distressed him. They were not like the Kirchner girls in the worn *Sketch* he fingered all day. La Coquetterie d'une Ange. One need not know French to understand Coquetterie, and Ange was an easy guess. He stared at the neat counterpane. A tall freckled girl with draggled red hair banged down a cup of cocoa and strode away.

Coquetterie, mannequin, lingerie, and all one could say in English was underwear. He flicked over the pages of the battered *Sketch*, and then looked at the little nurse touching her lips with carmine. "Georgette," he murmured sleepily, "crêpe georgette."

He would always be lame. For years his nerves would rise and quiver and knot themselves, and project loathsome images. But he had a fine body, and his soldiering had set his shoulders and hardened his hands and arms.

"Get him back on to the land," the doctors said.

The smells in the ward began to assail him, interlacing

spirals of odour, subtle but distinct. Disinfectant and distemper, the homely smell of blankets, the faint tang of blood, and then a sour draught from the third bed where a man had been sick.

He crept down under the clothes. Their associations rather than their textures, were abhorrent to him, they reminded him of evil noises . . . the crackle of starched aprons, clashing plates, unmodulated sounds. Georgette would never wear harsh things like that. She would wear . . . beautiful things with names . . . velours and organdie, and that faint windy stuff aeroplane.

He drowsed back to France, and saw in the sky great aeroplanes dipping and swerving, or holding on their line of steady flight like a travelling eye of God. The wisps of cloud that trailed a moment behind them were not more delicate than her dress. . . .

"What he wants, doctor, to my mind, is rousing. There he lies all day in a dream. He must have been a strong man once. No, we don't know what he was. Something out of doors I should think. He lies there with that precious Kirchner album, never a word to say."

The doctor nodded.

He lay very still. The presence of the matron made him writhe like the remembered scream of metal upon metal. Her large hands concealed bones that would snap. He lay like a rabbit in its form, and fright showed his dull gums between his drawn-back lips.

Weeks passed. Then one day he got up and saw himself in a glass. He was not surprised. It was all as he had known it must be. He could not go back to the old life. It seemed to him that he would soil its loveliness. Its exotics would shrivel and tarnish as he limped by. "Light things, and winged, and holy" they fluttered past him, crêpe velours, crêpe de Chine, organdie, aero-

phane, georgette. . . . He had dropped his stick . . . there was no one to wash his dirty hands. . . . The red-haired nurse found him crying, and took him back to bed.

For two months longer he laboured under their kindness and wasted under their placidity. He brooded, realising with pitiful want of clarity that there were unstable delicate things by which he might be cured. He found a ritual and a litany. Dressed in vertical black, he bore on his outstretched arms, huge bales of wound stuffs. With a turn of the wrist he would unwrap them, and they would fall from him rayed like some terrestrial star. The Kirchner album supplied the rest. He named the girls, Suzanne and Verveine, Ambre and Desti, and ranged them about him. Then he would undress them, and dress them again in immaculate fabrics. While he did that he could not speak to them because his mouth would be barred with pins.

The doctors found him weaker.

Several of the nurses were pretty. That was not what he wanted. Their fresh skins irritated him. Somewhere there must still be women whose skins were lustrous with powder, and whose eyes were shadowed with violet from an ivory box. The brisk provincial women passed through his ward visiting from bed to bed. In their homely clothes there was an echo of the lovely fashions of *mondaines*, buttons on a skirt where a slit should have been, a shirt cut to the collar bone whose opening should have sprung from the hollow between the breasts.

Months passed. The fabric of his dream hardened into a shell for his spirit. He remained passive under the hospital care.

They sent him down to a farm on a brilliant March day.

His starved nerves devoured the air and sunlight. If the winds parched, they braced him, and when the snow fell it buried his memories clean. Because she had worn a real musquash coat, and carried a brocade satchel he had half believed the expensive woman who had sat by his bed, and talked about the worth and the beauty of a life at the plough's tail. Of course he might not be able to plough because of his poor leg . . . but there was always the milking . . . or pigs . . . or he might thatch. . . .

Unfamiliarity gave his world a certain interest. He fluttered the farmer's wife. Nothing came to trouble the continuity of his dream. The sheen on the new grass, the expanse of sky, now heavy as marble, now luminous; the embroidery that a bare tree makes against the sky, the iridescent scum on a village pond, these were his remembrancers, the assurance of his realities. Beside them a cow was an obscene vision of the night.

Too lame to plough or to go far afield, it seemed as though his fate must overtake him among the horned beasts. So far he had ignored them. At the afternoon milking he had been an onlooker, then a tentative operator. Unfortunately the farmer recognised a born milkman. At five o'clock next morning they would go out together to the byres.

At dawn the air was like a sheet of glass; behind it one great star glittered. Dimmed by a transparent shutter, the hard new light poured into the world. A stillness so keen that it seemed the crystallisation of speed hung over the farm. From the kitchen chimney rose a feather of smoke, vertical, delicate, light as a plume on Gaby's head. As he stamped out into the yard in his gaiters and corduroys he thought of the similitude and his mouth twisted.

In the yard the straw rose in yellow bales out of the brown dung pools. Each straw was brocaded with frost, and the thin ice crackled under his boots. He paused. "Diamanté," he said at last, "that's it."

On a high shoulder of down above the house, a flock of sheep were gathered like a puffy mat of irregular design. The continual bleating, the tang of the iron bell, gave coherence to the tranquillity of that Artemisian dawn. A hound let loose from the manor by some early groom passed menacing over the soundless grass. A cock upon the pigsty wall tore the air with his screams. He stopped outside the byre now moaning with restless life. The cock brought memories. "Chanticleer, they called him, like that play once. . . ."

He remembered how he had once stood outside the window of a famous shop and thrilled at a placard. . . . "In twenty-four hours M. Lewis arrives from Paris with the Chanticleer toque." It had been a stage hit, of course, one hadn't done business with it, but, O God! the London women whose wide skirts rose with the wind till they bore them down the street like ships. He remembered a phrase he had heard once, a "scented gal." They were like that. The open door of the cow-shed steamed with the rankness that had driven out from life. . . . Inside were twenty female animals waiting to be milked.

He went in to the warm reeking dark.

He squatted on the greasy milk stool, spoke softly to his beast, and tugged away. The hot milk spurted out into the pail, an amazing substance, pure, and thick with bubbles. Its contact with caked hides and steaming straw sickened him. The gentle beast rubbed her head against her back and stared. He left the stall and her warm breath. The light was gaining. He could see rows of huge buttocks shifting uneasily. From two places he

heard the milk squirting in the pails. He turned to it again, and milked one beast and another, stripping each clean.

The warm milk whose beauty had passed began to nauseate him. There was a difference in nature between that winking pearling flow and the pale decency of a Lyon's tea jug. So this was where it all started. Dimly he realised that this was where most of life started, indifferent of any later phase. "Little bits of fluff," Rosalba and all the Kirchner tribe . . . was Polaire only a cow . . . or Delysia? . . . The light had now the full measure of day. A wind that tasted delicately of shingle and the turf flew to meet him. The mat on the down shoulder was now a dissolving view of ambulating mushrooms.

"Yes, my son," the farmer was saying, "you just stay here where you're well off, and go on milking for me. I know a born milkman when I see one, and I don't mind telling you you're it. I believe you could milk a bull if you were so inclined. . . ."

He sat silent, overwhelmed by the disarming kindness.

"See how the beasts take to you," the voice went on. "That old cow she's a terror, and I heard you soothing her down till she was pleasant as yon cat. It's dairy work you were cut out for. . . . There's a bull coming round this forenoon . . . pedigree . . . cost me a bit. You come along."

As yet they did not work him very hard, he would have time to think. He dodged his obligations towards the bull, and walked over to an upland field. He swept away the snow from under a thorn bush, folded his coat beneath him, and lit a cigarette.

"And I stopped, and I looked, and I listened." Yes, that was it, and about time too. For a while he whistled slowly Robey's masterpiece.

He had to settle with his sense of decency. It was all very well. These things might have to happen. The prospect of a milkless, meatless London impressed him as inconvenient. Still most of that stuff came from abroad, by sea. That was what the blockade was for. "I've got to get away from this. I never thought of this before, and I don't like it. I've been jockeyed into it somehow, and I don't like it. It's dirty, yes dirty, like a man being sick. In London we're civilised. . . ."

A gull floated in from the sea, and up the valley where the horses steamed at the spring ploughing.

"A bit of it may be all right, it's getting near that does one in. There aren't any women here. They're animals. Even those girls they call the squire's daughters. I never saw such boots. . . . They'd say that things were for use, and in London they're for show. . . . Give me the good old show. . . ." He stopped to dream. He was in a vast circular gallery so precipitous that standing one felt impelled to reel over and sprawl down into the stalls half a mile below. Some comedian had left the stage. Two gold-laced men were changing the numbers on either side. The orchestra played again, something that had no common tune. Then there swung on to the stage a woman plumed and violent, wrapped in leopard skins and cloth-of-gold. Sometimes she stepped like a young horse, sometimes she moved with the easy trailing of a snake. She did nothing that was not trivial, yet she invested every moment with a significance whose memory was rapture.

Quintessence was the word he wanted. He said . . . "There's a lot of use in shows."

Then he got up stiffly, and walked down the steep track to the farm, still whistling.

When the work was over he went out again. Before the pub, at the door marked "hotel," a car was standing, a green car with glossy panels and a monogram, cushioned inside with grey and starred with silver. A chauffeur, symphonic, also in green and bright buttons, was cranking her up. Perched upon the radiator was a naked silver girl. A woman came out of the inn. She wore white furs swathed over deep blue. Her feet flashed in their glossy boots. She wore a god in green jade and rose. Her gloves were rich and thick, like moulded ivory.

"Joy riding," said a shepherd, and trudged on, but he stood ravished. It was not all dead then, the fine delicate life that had been the substance of his dream. Rare it might be, and decried, but it endured. The car's low humming died away, phantom-like he saw it in the darkling lane, a shell enclosing a pearl, the quintessence of cities, the perfection of the world.

He had heard her deep voice. "I think we'll be getting back now." She was going back to London. He went into the bar and asked the landlady who she was.

"Sort of actress," the landlord said. And then, "The war ought to have stopped that sort of thing."

"Why, what's the harm?"

"Spending the money that ought to go beating those bloody Germans."

"All the same her sort brings custom," the wife had said.

He drank his beer and went out into the pure cold evening. It was six o'clock by the old time, and the radiance was unnatural.

He walked down the damp lane, pale between the hedge-

rows. It widened and skirted a pond covered with vivid slime.

"And that was all they had to say about her. . . ."

He hated them. A cart came storming up the hill, a compelling noise, grinding wheels and cracking shafts and jingling harness; hard breathing, and the rough voice of the carter to his beast.

At the pond the horse pulled up to breathe, his coat steamed, the carter leaned on the shaft.

"Some pull, that."

"Aye, so it be." He noticed for the first time the essential difference in their speech.

Carter and horse went up the hill. He lit another cigarette.

Something had happened to him, resolving his mind of all doubts. He saw the tail lights of a car drawing through the vast outskirts of a city. An infinite fine line went out from it and drew him also. That tail lamp was his star. Within the car a girl lay rapt, insolent, a cigarette at her lips.

He dreamed. Dark gathered. Then he noticed that something luminous was coming towards him. Down the hollow lane white patches were moving, irregular, but in sequence, patches that seemed to his dulled ears to move silently, and to eyes trained to traffic extraordinarily slow. The sun had passed. The shadow of the hill overhung the valley. The pale light above intensified its menace. The straggling patches, like the cups of snow the downs still held in every hollow, made down the lane to the pond's edge. It was very cold. From there no lighted windows showed. Only the tip of his cigarette was crimson as in Piccadilly.

With the sound of a charging beast, a song burst from him, as, soundless, each snowy patch slid from the land

on to the mirrored back of the pond. He began to shout out loud.

"Some lame, some tame, some game for anything, some like a stand-up fight,

Some stay abed in the morning, and some stay out all night.

Have you seen the ducks go by, go a rolling home?

Feeling very glad and spry, have you seen them roam?

There's mamma duck, papa duck, the grand old drake,

Leading away, what a noise they make.

Have you heard them quack, have you heard them quack,

have you seen those ducks go by?

Have you seen the ducks go by, go a rolling home? . . ."

The way back to the farm his voice answered Lee White's, and the Vaudeville chorus sustained them. At the farm door they forsook him. He had to be coherent to the farmer. He sought inspiration. It came. He played with the latch, and then walked into the kitchen, lyrical. . . .

"And I stopped, and I looked, and I left."

A month later found him on his knees, vertical in black cloth, and grey trousers, and exquisite bow tie. A roll of Lyons brocade, silver, and peach, was pliant between his fingers as the teats of a cow. Inside it a girl stood frowning down upon him.

Despair was on her face, and on the faces of the attendant women.

"But if you can't get me the lace to go with it, what am I to wear?"

"I am sorry, madame. . . . Indeed we have done all that is possible. It seems that it is not to be had. I can assure madame that we have done our best." He rose and appealed to the women. His conviction touched them all.

"Madame, anything that we can do. . . ."

The lovely girl frowned on them, and kicked at her half-pinned draperies.

"When the war starts interfering with my clothes," she said, "the war goes under. . . ."

His eyes kindled.



NORMAN DAVEY

© Maul & Fox

NORMAN DAVEY

THE FIRST VIOLIN

THE swing doors of the Restaurant Govard swung open and let a gust of cold air into the heated lobby: they also let in Mr. Matthew Sumner. The Restaurant Govard is noisy and expensive: the cloak-room attendant, in a uniform which approximates to that of an officer in the brigade of Guards, very properly insists on giving you a numbered ticket for your hat and coat: there is a place where you can wash your hands and a be-buttoned page will hand you a towel the size of a pocket-handkerchief, and remove an imaginary fly from your coat collar with a dissipated clothes-brush, for the sum of sixpence. The food is eatable—if you order your dinner beforehand: the champagne is drinkable—if you are willing to pay for it: the remaining wines on the list are either undrinkable or unprocurable. There is an orchestra consisting of two violins, a 'cello with a bald head, and a baby grand that is usually out of tune. The cigars are not very much worse nor very much dearer than at other eating-places of the same class. The proprietor is fat: he wears a small waxed moustache, a gold watch-chain and long, not too white, starched cuffs. He was named Jacob by his parents, but is usually called George by young gentlemen with a superfluity of cash. The tables are too close to one another: there are not enough waiters: and there is a gallery where the amorous may escape notice. The

Restaurant Govard is the last place in the world where one might have expected to find Matthew Sumner. But Sumner was one of those people who are always to be found in unexpected places, and, indeed, he looked a little out of place almost wherever he happened to be. He looked at home at neither the Curio club nor the Carfax club: he belonged to a cat and dog club which affected Bohemianism in a cellar, where he looked more out of place than ever. He was a remarked figure at Monte Carlo, and he was supposed to have a history in the Casino: he would have been equally conspicuous at a diaconal council. His was—if the phrase may be allowed—a conspicuous inconspicuousity.

But Matthew Sumner had a reason for going into the Restaurant Govard: it was, to be sure, a Matthew-Sumnerish reason. He slipped in through those too-easily-opened swing doors to avoid a friend. Had the hour been earlier he would probably have gone into a shop and bought something that he did not want. But it was half-past seven and the shops were closed. There was really no need on this occasion for him to penalise himself by eating a bad dinner in worse company merely to escape an uncongenial acquaintance. Any other man would, after a few words of greeting, have hurried away to keep an imaginary and very urgent appointment. But Sumner was incapable of this dexterity, and so a few minutes later he was threading his way between a number of crowded tables behind an agitated waiter.

The restaurant was very full, and Sumner, after a perambulation on the floor of the house, was at last provided with a seat in the gallery. He sat at a small table immediately behind a big man in evening dress, and was forgotten by the waiter. He looked around him. On his right was the wall: at his left elbow was the

balustrade of the gallery, and looking over it and down he had a view—foreshortened from above—of a number of uninteresting people eating too much. His fingers played with the salt-spoon, and he had an almost irresistible desire to empty a little upon the shoulders of a large woman, whose corsage was designed more for a horizontal than for a bird's-eye inspection.

Resisting this temptation, Mr. Matthew Sumner looked at the big man in front of him. He was over six feet: he was fat: he probably weighed sixteen stone. Little creases of fat rolled down from the back of his neck over the edge of his collar. He was partially bald, had a large fleshy nose and a double chin. He appeared to have ordered his dinner beforehand; to know the waiter by name; and to be a *persona grata* with the boss. He was not dining alone. Opposite him sat a girl dressed in red. She was very slender and looked a year or so over twenty. Her dark hair lay in a little cluster of curls around her small head. Her dress was of a clinging material of the colour of red rambler roses, and fell away from two narrow ribbons on the shoulders to meet in front somewhere below the level of the table-cloth and behind somewhere about the waist. She was smoking cigarettes, between courses, in a long ivory holder tipped with gold. A bottle of champagne in a bucket of ice stood at the side of the table, from which two glasses were being continually filled by an assiduous and servile waiter.

Matthew Sumner began to feel hungry, and, after several unsuccessful attempts, managed to stop the wrong waiter. About ten minutes later he found the right one, and, having ordered a *sole meunière* and an *omelette fine* to follow, looked at the wine list.

"I'll have half a Margaux," said Sumner.

"I am sorry, sare, there is not left," said the waiter.

After several bad starts, Sumner ordered a pint of a rather doubtful Beaune (it was called Corton on the list) and had it in time to drink with his coffee.

Now and again the orchestra played something—popular ragtime: selection from *Véronique*: the Barcarolle: and so forth. The playing was not quite so automatic as a penny-in-the-slot piano, but very nearly. Presently the musicians took a rest: one by one they left the balcony; the 'cellist bringing up the rear, wiping his neck and face in a generous manner with a very large handkerchief. Matthew Sumner was glad of the respite. The big man in front of him bawled for a waiter and directed that a bottle of champagne be sent to the orchestra. A little later the first violin, a lean, cadaverous-looking, old-young man, with an elf-lock of pale yellow hair hanging limply across his forehead, came to say how much the orchestra appreciated the generosity. The large man waved the messenger away, blew a little cigar smoke into his face as he turned to go, and said lazily: "Aw, well, perhaps you'll play something a little less vile later on." The thin girl laughed. While Matthew Sumner was waiting for his omelette, a waiter brought up a small folded note to the large man. The large man glanced at it, and cried: "Good God!"

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"It's from Melton—telephone message—Kobinsky no good for to-morrow night: he's gone off suddenly: message to say he won't be back till Friday: the Ekstein woman's at the bottom of it: too late to do anything now.

"Who's the Ekstein woman?" asked the girl in red.

The large man explained the moral character of the Ekstein woman in terms which made Matthew Sumner blush. The slim girl pouted and said:

"I don't think you're very polite, Algy."

The man swore again—and enabled Matthew Sumner to overhear a commentary upon Kobinsky that would have formed excellent material for a libel action.

“However,” he said at last, “there’s damn all to be done now: and I’m not going to let that damn dago spoil my evening.” He took another cigar from a long leather case and shouted for a Grand Marnier, Cordon Rouge. Sumner sipped at his coffee and wondered how long it would be before he got his bill. But a few minutes later he forgot all about going.

By all the theories of dramatic incidence: according to all the rules of cause and effect of the fitness of things, that noisy and ridiculous eating-place should have become stricken into silence as the vibrations of the strings of the first fiddle filled the room with sound. It would be more agreeable to suppose something of this sort to have taken place, but to Matthew Sumner, almost holding his breath and with his coffee-spoon poised in mid-air, lest it should strike the side of the cup and become a gong and a desecration, the chatter and clatter seemed more ferocious than before. A half-dozen or so of the people in the restaurant had perhaps ceased to talk. A woman murmured sentimentally that she adored Sibelius and impressed her friends with whom she was dining, who had not heard the name before. A fair-haired youth, in a high collar and a large blue-spotted tie, said something about “good old Chopin,” and his companion, a very pretty girl with bobbed hair and a Liberty “art” frock, cried, “Oh, I do hope they’ll play the Rag-Picker next!” A fat gentleman in the corner said that he was a little too old for classical music and that what he liked now was “a simple chiune.” There were four people in the room who knew what the soloist was playing and there were only two who were sufficiently sober to know that they

were listening to the Bach Chaconne, played as it had never been played before, and, probably, would never be played again. Of those two, one was Mr. Matthew Sumner: the other was the large man with the slim girl.

The first fiddle had finished. With the long wisp of yellow hair half over one eye, he swayed a little uneasily on his feet as he made his bow. There was a sporadic applause from a number of people who had not listened to him. Neither Matthew Sumner nor the large man applauded: they stared spell-bound at the fiddler, who was now borrowing a "gasper" from the pianist, and the ash of the cigar that the large man was smoking had grown long and top-heavy and at last had fallen off unregarded on the sleeve of his coat. The girl in red shrugged her shoulders and with slender fingers rearranged the position of the bands above her arms.

"You haven't admired my new frock, yet," she said, petulantly.

"Aw—go to hell!" said her companion, still staring past her at the orchestra; and then he suddenly brought his fist down on to the small table with such force as to spill half of the contents of his coffee cup into the saucer and to upset over the tablecloth three shillings' worth of a liqueur.

"My God, I'll do it!" he cried.

He called a waiter.

"I want to speak to the young man with the fiddle," he said.

A few moments later, the man stood before the table. Matthew Sumner looked at him with a fascinated regard.

His forehead was large: his nose was long: his chin was small and weak: he had a loose mouth and his teeth were stained with cigarette smoking: his eyes were of a greenish-grey colour and of a furtive expression. He

might have been any age between thirty and forty. A commonplace young man, thought Sumner—of an unpleasing exterior; but—he had heard him play.

“What’s your name?” asked the large man.

“Muntz, sare.”

“A German?”

“No, sare: I am Swiss, from Zurich: but I have been naturalised for many years.” His speech was a little thick: his eyes looked anywhere but at his interlocutor: he hiccoughed once or twice behind his hand.

“What time do you go?”

“Go, sare? from here?”

“Yes—yes.”

“At ten o’clock, sare.”

“Come to my flat as soon as you leave here: here’s my card: it’s quite near here. I want to talk business to you—you understand, *business*: it will be to your advantage. See—here’s a fiver to show you that I mean business.”

The first violin picked up the note and, folding it, placed it in a dilapidated pocket-book.

“I will come, sare,” he said, with a low bow, “you need not have fear: I will come.”

The fiddler returned to the orchestra.

“What did you give that rube five quid for?” asked the girl in red.

“Because I liked the shape of his nose.”

“Bah!—and asked him to come to your flat?”

The large man leant heavily across the table and snarled:

“Look here, Zoe: I don’t say you’re not pretty: I’m not saying you’re not the goods. But I’m not going to have you interfere in my affairs: see? Don’t ask questions about what don’t concern you. The fatal vice of curiosity

has done in better girls than you: once upon a time there was a guy called Bluebeard—savvy? You keep that little rosebud mouth of yours shut—shut tight, except for kissing, and wait for what the little fairies bring you. That's all you've got-ter do: that's all your business. I'll look after mine."

"Righto—don't lose your hair," replied the thin girl. "I don't want to know anything about your beastly business. I want another Grand Marnier."

At that moment the orchestra crashed out into rag-time, and Matthew Sumner heard no longer any connected talk between the two at the table in front of him, above the din of that syncopated music. In the orchestra, he could see the inspired interpreter of the Chaconne swaying backwards and forwards in rhythm to the time, scraping the vibrating strings with a feverish energy, his elf-lock tossing to and fro on his forehead like a sprig of ivy loose across a windy pane, as much a part of this mechanic band as the moustached consumptive who played the second fiddle: the bald-headed 'cellist: or the man at the piano with the *Pink 'Un* sticking out of his pocket. As the orchestra—with an almost audible gasp of relief—ended their activity, the large man and the slender girl in red got up and made their way out of the restaurant. A little later, Matthew Sumner succeeded in paying his bill.

"Who is that who has just gone out?" he asked, as he rose to go—"the man who was sitting at that table there?"

"The gentleman with the lady in the red dress? That is Sare Algernon Stein, sare: he is de boss of the Imperium and the Quincunx and I don't know what. . . . He is a very big man indeed, sare . . . he often dines 'ere, sare. Thank you, sare: thank you. Good night, sare."

Matthew Sumner walked along the muddied pavement and between mean houses with his head in the clouds—and the theme of the Bach Chaconne followed him to bed.

Some ten days later, Mr. Matthew Sumner again passed through the doors of the Restaurant Govard. The memory of bad food, bad wine, and bad company had so far deterred him from this adventure. But to-night he could no longer resist the wish to hear again—if the gods would so order it—the wonder-music of the first fiddle.

He had come late. There was no vacant table; and at last he found himself sitting at a small table in front of the large man, who, apparently, had been dining alone.

He ordered something from the bill of fare and a small Perrier water. The band was playing some rag-time, popular at the moment (the description of which Sumner did not know), with a considerable emphasis. When they stopped Sumner gave a sigh of relief. Possibly the large man sitting opposite him overheard it, for he said to Sumner.

“Beastly noise, isn’t it?”

“It’s hardly agreeable,” replied Matthew Sumner.

“Agreeable be damned,” said the large man, “it’s bloody awful!”

“Yes—it is—er—most unpleasant,” said Sumner, nervously.

The waiter brought the large man a cup of coffee and some brandy.

“Do you mind if I smoke?”

“Not at all, sir,” said Sumner.

The large man lighted a cigar.

“And yet the fiddler with the yellow hair can play: yes, sir, *play*: and when I say play—by God, I mean play—play the violin. I don’t mean fire-works in a penny gaff:

I don't mean sentimental miaowing in a Chelsea studio: I mean music—and I know what I'm talking about."

"Indeed, Sir Algernon. . . ."

"Oh, you know who I am"—and the large man threw himself back in his chair, put his cigar in the left-hand corner of his mouth, his thumbs into his waistcoat, and visibly expanded. "So when I say that fellow there can play. . . ."

"Yes, I know he can: I heard him play Bach the other night."

"Ah, you were here too. I see you know something about music, sir."

"Indeed, I don't . . . I am fond of it . . . I . . ."

But Sir Algernon Stein was shouting loudly for the waiter. He looked at Sumner's glass.

"You're not a teetotaler, sir? Don't say you're a teetotaler?"

"I am not; but . . ."

"You will drink a glass of wine with me?"

"No—no—really, sir; besides, I see you have finished your dinner."

"What—hell—does that matter? drink the Widow any old time. Waiter! A bottle of the Widow—vite—sharp—at once!"

Mr. Matthew Sumner's protestations and excuses were swept aside. Sir Algernon Stein—with a great expenditure of energy—said that he would not be denied; and a few minutes later Sumner was drinking champagne.

"It was a wonderful performance," said Sumner.

"It was. The Chaconne wants a bit of playing: and it wasn't only the execution. I tell you . . ." the large man stopped abruptly, and tossed off a glass of Clicquot at a gulp.

"Have you ever heard Kobinsky?" he asked.

"Some years ago."

"He played better then than he does now. Do you think he played as well as this fellow?"

"No, I don't think he did."

"Nor did the others."

"The others? I thought there was hardly anybody in the restaurant who took any notice at all of . . ."

"No—sir: not here. In the Georgian Hall. The critics, man, the critics. Old Gimbold—and Hatton of the *Times*: and Meyersberg—young Preston woke him up after the first few bars, which was damned sporting of him; and Jimmy Eld, and the *Daily Mail* man. All the whole pack of 'em: went off the deep end—every one of 'em! Say I don't know genius when I hear it? Say there's no music in me? Look at this, man: look at *this!*"

Sir Algernon Stein took out of his breast-pocket a bloated pocket-book, and, taking some newspaper cuttings from it, threw them across to Mr. Matthew Sumner. They were neatly docketed in the left-hand top corner, and the first cutting that he picked up appeared to be from the *Times*.

Matthew Sumner read them through carefully and with a growing wonder. "They are very enthusiastic," he said, handing the newspaper cuttings back to Stein. "But I don't quite understand. These are all about Kobinsky."

"Of course they are. Good God! you don't suppose I'm going to stick up an unknown man on the Georgian Hall audience? Oh, I know what I'm about. What do you think an English audience pays a guinea a seat for? To hear *music*? Bah! they don't know one note from another. They pay their money—bless 'em—to hear Kobinsky—to *see* Kobinsky: to say afterwards: 'Oh! my dear, I went to hear Kobinsky last night.' They don't

want to go to their friends and say: 'I heard John Smith—or I heard Auguste Duval—last night—a quite unknown genius: he was marvellous. . . .' Pouf! *That* doesn't cut any ice . . . not a champagne-bucket full. Aw! but I'm clever: they had to hear Kobinsky and they heard Kobinsky—at least as far as *they* were concerned."

"I don't understand," wailed Mr. Matthew Sumner.

"Look here, Mr.—er—I don't know your name."

"Sumner."

"Look, Mr. Sumner—this is not to go beyond ourselves: not that it really matters: nobody would believe you, anyway."

"No, no, Sir Algernon; of course I won't . . ."

"All right—when I like a man—damme, I trust him: I'm a judge of men. There're no flies on Algernon Stein. I carried the whole blessed thing off—with honours. I'll tell you."

Sir Algernon Stein filled his guest's glass: filled his own: emptied it, and began.

"Kobinsky is *difficile*: in fact, he's a damn nuisance. He was due to play on the 15th, at the Georgian Hall. On the 14th I was dining here. I had a message to say that Kobinsky had gone off with a damn woman he's running around with and wasn't playing on the 15th. And God damn it all, I'd got the whole house booked up to the gods! Well, it was too late: there was nothing to be done: I'd lose money, and, what was worse, reputation over the business: and there it was. I could be nasty to Kobinsky about it afterwards: but that wouldn't help me any: and, besides, Kobinsky has the name and can do pretty well as he likes, curse him! Then that tow-haired creature in the band there got up and played his piece: played the Chaconne, by God! You heard him play—you

know what it was like. And then I had a brain-wave—I—Algernon Stein: and he—the Swiss Muntz, fiddler in a Soho eating-house, played at the Georgian Hall before Hatton and Meyersberg and Gimbold and all the nobs—and knocked 'em!"

"But he isn't a bit like Kobinsky: they all said . . ."

"Ain't he the same height and build? that's good enough. Why, I took him round to Clarkson beforehand: and if, after he had finished with him, you had put 'em side by side, Kobinsky's own mother wouldn't have known which from which. Aw, believe me, Clarkson's a bloody marvel. Besides, Kobinsky being such a hairy brute helped a bit."

"Good gracious! Do you mean to say that that young man there was disguised as Kobinsky and deceived the critics and the audience of the Georgian Hall?"

"Pre-cise-ly."

"But it's wonderful: it's hardly credible. If I had not, myself, heard him play the other night . . ."

"Aw! I'm Algernon Stein," said the large man, with a great air.

"But what will Kobinsky say about it?" asked Matthew Sumner, wonderingly.

"Kobinsky will jolly well keep his mouth shut. Why, man, he can't do anything else. What? tell the world and his wife that a coffee-place string-scraper in a wig played as well as he could—*better* than he could—until Hatton was sloppy about him in the *Times*, and Gimbold wrote as he hasn't written about anybody for fifteen years! You can bet a pony to a penny he's on the strict q-t about the whole business."

"What an amazing thing! Well, I am very glad that the young man has been discovered at last."

"Eh? What?"

"I have always held, Sir Algernon, that genius will out—sooner or later. Now this young man here, after toiling for years for a livelihood in a third-rate orchestra like this—to be discovered . . ."

"Do you think I'm a blasted idiot?" broke in Sir Algernon Stein.

"I beg your pardon," said Sumner.

"Do you think I'm a fool? This fellow is not going to be discovered: you bet your life on it. He's going to play on here in this gaff—or any other gaff that is fool enough to have him, if he gets the bird here—for the rest of his natural."

"But—but, Sir Algernon," broke in Matthew Sumner, "he is a genius: you admit it yourself: you have discovered him. Why . . . ?"

"Do you think I don't know my business? What do you think I am? A philanthropic institution for helping the incompetent? Yes, yes, I know—don't interrupt me—of course, he can play—don't I know that?—but what use is that to me? What I want is the *name*. Why, it would take years and years to work the public up to the point of coming to hear *this* fellow. I tell you I know my business—and the public. As for discovering new geniuses; I leave that to the small speculators; I'm not going to waste my time and money on it. Let him get a certain amount of notoriety—if he's got the guts to do it—which he hasn't—and I'll take him up when he's known—but I'll be hanged if I'll touch him with a barge-pole before he gets a name."

"But this is horrible—horrible," broke in Mr. Matthew Sumner, excitedly. "The man's a genius—and you know it—and you're leaving him to waste his life in a place like this. It's—it's awful!"

"If he's a genius he'll push his way: and when he's

pushed his way and made a stir, I'll pick him up. Aw, you don't know what genius is: you talk like a bally school-girl. Genius is not being able to play or paint or write or any damned thing—thousands can do that. It's push, man, *push*—genius is *guts*. That fellow's got no *guts*—however much he plays, when he is the right amount drunk, or he wouldn't be where he is now."

"But it's shameful, sir: it's—it's damnable."

"I don't care what it is: all I know is it's business: and I've got-ter make my living like anybody else. Besides, *he* can't grouse. Good God, he got twenty quid for a quarter of an hour's work: more than he ever got in his life before. And he's a weak-kneed fool, I tell you. Good God, why didn't he tear off his false beard when it was all over, and the house roaring its applause—and even old Meyersberg awake and clapping? It would have knocked me badly: they would never have forgiven me: but, God, what an ad. for him! And why didn't he do it? Because he's got no guts: because he was afraid of me—the great Stein: because he's got a sick wife and wanted a paltry twenty quid at once. Bah! what business has *he* to have a sick wife: or a wife at all: if he was a genius, he would have seized the opportunity; let the sick wife die—what's that got to do with music?"

"But—but," stuttered Matthew Sumner, "it's abominable. I'll t-tell everybody about it! I'll—I'll . . ."

"No, you won't," said Sir Algernon Stein, as he rose heavily from his chair and towered over Sumner. "Oh, no, you won't. First, because you have said you won't, and that probably means something to *you*: and secondly, because if you do nobody will believe you. By all means, go and tell everybody: go and tell Gimbold, if you don't mind being kicked downstairs for your pains: go and tell it in the clubs, if you don't mind being called a liar:

tell it to the office-boy in Carmelite House: it won't go any further: tell it to the tin-bellies in Whitehall: it will make them laugh: and when you've told everybody come and tell me how you've got on: it will amuse me."

Sir Algernon Stein turned abruptly and strode out of the restaurant.

Matthew Sumner sat for some little time at his table in an ill mood. The remaining champagne stood untouched in the glass before him: he lit a cigar and a minute later laid it on his plate, where it went out, and was smoked, after he had left the restaurant, by a waiter. Most of the tables were empty by the time he went, and the orchestra had put away their instruments some ten minutes earlier.

As he was making his way out a tall figure in a shabby overcoat slipped through the swing doors in front of him. He wore a shapeless hat of dark felt and carried under his arm a violin-case. Outside, the tall figure turned northward toward Shaftesbury Avenue, and Mr. Matthew Sumner, obeying the impulse of the moment, followed him a little distance behind.

Up Shaftesbury Avenue and into Charing Cross Road, Mr. Matthew Sumner followed the first violin, and up the Charing Cross Road into Tottenham Court Road. Half-way up Tottenham Court Road the tall figure in the shabby overcoat turned into one of the dark streets on the left: Matthew Sumner still followed him. Here there were but few people in the streets and it was easy for Sumner to keep the man in front of him in sight. The two proceeded, in this manner, through a labyrinth of mean streets for some time. At length the fiddler turned suddenly into a mean court, out of a meaner and even more shabby-looking street. There was a lamp-post in the middle of the court, whose sickly light served only to show

the filth and refuse in the gutter, the uneven stones of the court and the grime-encrusted walls of the houses.

Matthew Sumner stood hesitant at the mouth of the court. But the tall figure of the first violin was underneath the lamp-post, bent over something on the ground. A moment later, while Sumner was still watching, the figure rose, holding, in its right hand, a violin. With a sudden semi-circular sweep of the arm it smashed the violin against the lamp-post. There was a sharp crash of splintering woodwork and the stones of the court were strewn with pieces of shattered instrument.

Mr. Matthew Sumner ran forward.

"Good God! why did you do that?" he cried.

The first violin of the orchestra of the Restaurant Govard turned and looked stupidly at Matthew Sumner.

"I play no more," he said.

"B-b-but . . ." stammered Sumner.

"I play no more in de orchestra," continued the other, waving the broken handle of the fiddle, which he still held in his right hand, "and zo—I break my violin. It has been played—you may not believe it, sare—by de great Kobinsky: before tousands and tousands of people: but de great Kobinsky will play it no more, and zo—de violin is broken. To-morrow I become a waiter: der are more tips."

"Stop!" cried Sumner.

But the figure in the stained overcoat and the felt hat had already vanished from the mean court, and Mr. Matthew Sumner was left alone in the uneven light of a lamp with a cracked pane, in company with a cheap violin-case and the scattered bits of a broken fiddle.

E. M. FORSTER

MR. ANDREWS

THE souls of the dead were ascending towards the Judgment Seat and the Gate of Heaven. The world soul pressed them on every side, just as the atmosphere presses upon rising bubbles, striving to vanquish them, to break their thin envelope of personality, to mingle their virtue with its own. But they resisted, remembering their glorious individual life on earth and hoping for an individual life to come.

Among them ascended the soul of a Mr. Andrews who, after a beneficent and honourable life, had recently deceased at his house in town. He knew himself to be kind, upright, and religious, and though he approached his trial with all humility, he could not be doubtful of its result. God was not now a jealous God. He would not deny salvation merely because it was expected. A righteous soul may reasonably be conscious of its own righteousness, and Mr. Andrews was conscious of his.

"The way is long," said a voice, "but by pleasant converse the way becomes shorter. Might I travel in your company?"

"Willingly," said Mr. Andrews. He held out his hand, and the two souls floated upwards together.

"I was slain fighting the infidel," said the other exultantly, "and I go straight to those joys of which the Prophet speaks."



E. M. FORSTER

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"Are you not a Christian?" asked Mr. Andrews gravely.

"No, I am a Believer. But you are a Moslem, surely?"

"I am not," said Mr. Andrews. "I am a Believer." The two souls floated upwards in silence, but did not release each other's hands. "I am broad-church," he added gently. The word "broad" quavered strangely amid the interspaces.

"Relate to me your career," said the Turk at last.

"I was born of a decent middle-class family, and had my education at Winchester and Oxford. I thought of becoming a Missionary, but was offered a post in the Board of Trade, which I accepted. At thirty-two I married, and had four children, two of whom have died. My wife survives me. If I had lived a little longer I should have been knighted."

"Now I will relate my career. I was never sure of my father, and my mother does not signify. I grew up in the slums of Salonika. Then I joined a band and we plundered the villages of the infidel. I prospered and had three wives, all of whom survive me. Had I lived a little longer I should have had a band of my own."

"A son of mine was killed travelling in Macedonia. Perhaps you killed him."

"It is very possible."

The two souls floated upward, hand in hand. Mr. Andrews did not speak again, for he was filled with horror at the approaching tragedy. This man, so godless, so lawless, so cruel, so lustful, believed that he would be admitted into Heaven. And into what a heaven—a place full of the crude pleasures of a ruffian's life on earth! But Mr. Andrews felt neither disgust nor moral indignation. He was only conscious of an immense pity,

and his own virtues confronted him not at all. He longed to save the man whose hand he held more tightly, who, he thought, was now holding more tightly on to him. And when he reached the Gate of Heaven, instead of saying, "Can I enter?" as he had intended, he cried out, "Cannot *he* enter?"

And at the same moment the Turk uttered the same cry. For the same spirit was working in each of them.

From the gateway a voice replied, "Both can enter." They were filled with joy and pressed forward together.

Then the voice said, "In what clothes will you enter?"

"In my best clothes," shouted the Turk, "the ones I stole." And he clad himself in a splendid turban and a waistcoat embroidered with silver, and baggy trousers, and a great belt in which were stuck pipes and pistols and knives.

"And in what clothes will you enter?" said the voice to Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Andrews thought of his best clothes, but he had no wish to wear them again. At last he remembered and said, "Robes."

"Of what colour and fashion?" asked the voice.

Mr. Andrew had never thought about the matter much. He replied, in hesitating tones, "White, I suppose, of some flowing soft material," and he was immediately given a garment such as he had described. "Do I wear it rightly?" he asked.

"Wear it as it pleases you," replied the voice. "What else do you desire?"

"A harp," suggested Mr. Andrews. "A small one."

A small gold harp was placed in his hand.

"And a palm—no, I cannot have a palm, for it is the reward of martyrdom; my life has been tranquil and happy."

"You can have a palm if you desire it."

But Mr. Andrews refused the palm, and hurried in his white robes after the Turk, who had already entered Heaven. As he passed in at the open gate, a man, dressed like himself, passed out with gestures of despair.

"Why is he not happy?" he asked.

The voice did not reply.

"And who are all those figures, seated inside on thrones and mountains? Why are some of them terrible, and sad, and ugly?"

There was no answer. Mr. Andrews entered, and then he saw that those seated figures were all the gods who were then being worshipped on the earth. A group of souls stood round each, singing his praises. But the gods paid no heed, for they were listening to the prayers of living men, which alone brought them nourishment. Sometimes a faith would grow weak, and then the god of that faith also drooped and dwindled and fainted for his daily portion of incense. And sometimes, owing to a revivalist movement, or to a great commemoration, or to some other cause, a faith would grow strong, and the god of that faith grow strong also. And, more frequently still, a faith would alter, so that the features of its god altered and became contradictory, and passed from ecstasy to respectability, or from mildness and universal love to the ferocity of battle. And at times a god would divide into two gods, or three, or more, each with his own ritual and precarious supply of prayer.

Mr. Andrews saw Buddha and Vishnu and Allah and Jehovah and the Elohim. He saw little ugly determined gods who were worshipped by a few savages in the same way. He saw the vast shadowy outlines of the Neopagan Zeus. There were cruel gods and coarse gods and tortured gods, and, worse still, there were gods who were

peevish, or deceitful, or vulgar. No aspiration of humanity was unfulfilled. There was even an intermediate state for those who wished it, and for the Christian Scientists a place where they could demonstrate that they had not died.

He did not play his harp for long, but hunted vainly for one of his dead friends. And though souls were continually entering Heaven, it still seemed curiously empty. Though he had all that he expected, he was conscious of no great happiness, no mystic contemplation of beauty, no mystic union with good. There was nothing to compare with that moment outside the gate, when he prayed that the Turk might enter and heard the Turk uttering the same prayer for him. And when at last he saw his companion he hailed him with a cry of human joy.

The Turk was seated in thought, and round him, by sevens, sat the virgins who are promised in the Koran.

"Oh, my dear friend!" he called out. "Come here and we will never be parted, and such as my pleasures are, they shall be yours also. Where are my other friends? Where are the men whom I love, or whom I have killed?"

"I, too, have only found you," said Mr. Andrews. He sat down by the Turk, and the virgins, who were all exactly alike, ogled them with coal black eyes.

"Though I have all that I expected," said the Turk, "I am conscious of no great happiness. There is nothing to compare with that moment outside the gate when I prayed that you might enter, and heard you uttering the same prayer for me. These virgins are as beautiful and good as I had fashioned, yet I could wish that they were better."

As he wished, the forms of the virgins became more rounded, and their eyes grew larger and blacker than before. And Mr. Andrews, by a wish similar in kind,

increased the purity and softness of his garment and the glitter of his harp. For in that place their expectations were fulfilled, but not their hopes.

"I am going," said Mr. Andrews at last. "We desire infinity and we cannot imagine it. How can we expect it to be granted? I have never imagined anything infinitely good or beautiful excepting in my dreams."

"I am going with you," said the other. Together they sought the entrance gate, and the Turk parted with his virgins and his best clothes, and Mr. Andrews cast away his robes and his harp.

"Can we depart?" they asked.

"You can both depart if you wish," said the voice, "but remember what lies outside."

As soon as they passed the gate, they felt again the pressure of the world soul. For a moment they stood hand in hand resisting it. Then they suffered it to break in upon them, and they, and all the experience they had gained, and all the love and wisdom they had generated, passed into it, and made it better.

W. L. GEORGE

PEREZ

I

"AND that," said Mr. Warlingham, holding up a few sheets of quarto paper, "is the end. The end," he repeated meditatively, his fingers playing with the manuscript as if he could not bear to hand it to his secretary.

"May I congratulate you, Mr. Warlingham?" said Miss Medhurst. "I'm sure it will be a great success. A greater success than any of your novels." Mr. Warlingham raised a modest hand, and Miss Medhurst hastened to repair possible error. "I don't mean that your novels haven't been successful; no one could say that; you remember how America went mad over 'The Four Frontiersmen' . . . and there was 'Juliana' too: eleven editions in nine weeks!"

"You forget the private limited edition on Japan paper," said Mr. Warlingham with some severity. "Yes, I haven't done badly." The novelist leant back in his armchair, finger-tips joined, staring at the ceiling with a certain complacency. He was a shortish, stoutish man, aged about forty, with a rosy complexion, well-kept hands, a neatly clipped moustache and a noticeable baldness. Upon his rather thick, not unpleasant mouth lingered a little private smile, as if he were remembering obstacles easily overcome, were listing in his mind past



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triumphs; as if confident in merits that had not been overlooked by praise. Mr. Warlingham was successful. Mr. Warlingham looked successful. Then again he played with those manuscript sheets. He had dictated the whole of the book to Miss Medhurst except the last page, for he knew that the highest skill is obtained only when the hand labours with the brain. Still at that moment, Mr. Warlingham was conscious of some uneasiness. It was an indefinable feeling which had come upon him during the last few days, a sense of . . . how could he put it? secret criticism? No, not exactly that. True, he had found that last page incredibly difficult to write; he had been held back by some doubt which his mind could not analyse. And now the strange sensation grew stronger. He felt as if he were not alone, as if something faintly hostile stood by his side. He wrinkled his brows crossly. "Ridiculous," he murmured. Indeed, his surroundings were strictly normal. Here he sat in his familiar study, his typical study: the deep red and blue carpet, the crowded bookshelves, the excellent appliances, the files, the scales, the typewriter in the corner, everything in his comfortable room cried out to him that he sat in the midst of ordinary life. But then? What? Tired, he supposed. Anyhow he mustn't brood.

"Well," said Mr. Warlingham, briskly, "here are the last sheets, Miss Medhurst. Please type them out, and I will revise them with the rest."

Miss Medhurst held out a wiry little hand and took the manuscript with an air of devotion. Her author's words thrilled her always, but conveyed in his own handwriting, they took on an air of sanctity. Then Mr. Warlingham reached across the desk and took back the sheets. "I will read you the last page," he said, and Miss Medhurst wondered at a tone of defiance which had come into his

voice. She could not know that Mr. Warlingham was reacting against a sudden growth of that secret feeling. As he gave her the sheets he had again experienced it, and determined to read the page aloud. After all there *might* be something wrong with the stuff.

"Oh," she gasped, "please do. Like that," she added hurriedly. "I shan't make any mistakes in typing." But a faint flush rose in her pale cheeks as she grew conscious of her own excitement. Miss Medhurst was of indeterminable age, between thirty and forty; she was small, thin, with little features that had once been pretty; dressed always in dark colours she looked even more insignificant than she was; her hair was of a neutral brown shade; only her eyes, that all mankind could, if it cared, describe as yellow-grey, grew large and soft as she gazed upon the man whose secretary she had been for ten years, yet was still to her marvellous and inspired. Mr. Warlingham did not observe any change in those neutral eyes. He cleared his throat, and read. The first few sentences Miss Medhurst did not hear, for her heart beat fast, but after a moment the old spell worked, and as in a purple cloud the phrases of Mr. Warlingham took shape for her:

" . . . The six men stood undecided about the long shape that lay upon the ground. It was as if they feared to touch that sumptuously wild buccaneer, heavy-breeched, scarlet-sashed, so dark, and fierce, and beautiful, lest the slightest movement should release the mortal spark that lingered still in the faintly heaving breast. At last Moreno spoke: 'We cannot leave him here,' he said. 'The sun is too hot.'

"Indeed, from the purple vault above, the Mexican sun felt like a heavy hand, and the air was filled with the buzzing of insects; the air was crowded with life; Moreno, pitiless and crime-stained, felt his heart grow big and

painful as he thought that nature was filled with life, yet could not afford another hour to Perez, Perez the man without fear, his comrade who lay there dying. 'Come,' he said gently, 'let us carry him into the house.'

"A few minutes later they stood a little away from the bedside. Perez breathed more hurriedly. He grew yet paler, and Moreno stepped forward, an anguish upon him. Then for one moment his comrade opened his eyes, those soft, lustrous eyes; his lips twisted into a crooked smile as for the last time he met the gaze of Moreno; but, very slowly, his head sank down and was still. Thus he lay, his dark face sharp outlined against the pillow, as an ancient bronze, his black beard erect, in death defiant as in life.

"Moreno fell upon his knees: 'Good-bye, eagleheart, good-bye,' he cried. One by one the others stole away; Perez lay still and aloof. And his soul, winging its way through space, carried as a last memory the sound of his comrade's weeping."

Miss Medhurst did not move; her yellow-grey eyes were dim, for she too loved the eaglehearted buccaneer. So she did not notice that as Mr. Warlingham pronounced the last word, he started so violently that his knees rapped against the desk. Nor did she see him furtively glance to the right and left, eyes dilated, or fumble for his handkerchief with an unsteady hand. For Mr. Warlingham had distinctly heard a voice, a loud, indignant voice. And what it said was: "Nonsense!"

Nonsense? Somebody had said: "Nonsense." With sudden suspicion Mr. Warlingham stared at Miss Medhurst, then was ashamed, for his secretary sat in the same rapt attitude, and her eyes were swimming in tears. But then? what? Oh, if only his hand wouldn't shake so. Wherever had he put his handkerchief? He swore

silently, still casting into the corners of the room a frightened gaze.

"It's wonderful," murmured Miss Medhurst, "wonderful. Oh, it'll be a great success. It's better than anything Henry James ever did. It's better than Hall Caine. But why must Perez die? Yes, I suppose it's artistic truth and that he had to die, that . . ."

"Miss Medhurst," said Mr. Warlingham in a voice suddenly metallic and laboured, "if you don't mind . . . I won't do any more to-day . . . I'm not very well."

She bent forward with quick sympathy: "Yes, of course, work like yours takes all your strength. I'll go. And, please, please, Mr. Warlingham, rest. Go into the Park. And I'm sure a tonic . . ."

Mr. Warlingham was not listening. He sat with clenched hands: when Miss Medhurst said, "Why must Perez die?" a voice had grumbled: "He didn't."

II

For a long time Mr. Warlingham sat with his face in his hands. The silence was complete, no ghostly voice assailed his ears, but at any moment he knew that it might speak. Haunted! he was haunted. An hour passed while his excited brain revolved horrid stories; he thought of phantoms that rattle chains, of the death dog, of riding witches. At length, only, as the study grew dark and he hurriedly switched on the electric light, he forced himself into a balanced state of mind.

"This won't do," he said aloud. "If I go on like this I'll get worse, and then . . ." he shuddered, "I'll find myself in a private nursing home, to call it by a polite name. How can you be so absurd?" he asked himself. "You let yourself become the prey of your nerves just

because you're a little overworked; Old Medhurst is right; she's been at me for months to take a rest. Anyhow . . .” Mr. Warlingham suddenly grew defiant and addressed the wall: “Speak up! Now's your chance. I'm listening.” There was no reply, and, nearly comforted, Mr. Warlingham got into his evening clothes and went to his club. He ate an excellent dinner; conscious of the rights of an invalid he drank a pint of champagne. This helped him to find the company attractive; his satisfaction was increased after dinner, for he made up a four at bridge with Draycott, Lord Langwith and the club bore, and as fortune gave him almost uniformly good hands he grew to like the club bore. At twelve o'clock Mr. Warlingham unlocked his front door, meeting the darkness with a slight tremor that passed away at once; faintly conscious of uneasiness as he undressed, he for a moment feared that he would have the horrors. But he slept almost at once, and awoke only to find that his valet had gone out, leaving by his side his letters, the newspapers, and the morning tea, while brilliant spring sunshine lit up every part of the room. Almost at once he remembered.

“Ah,” he thought, as he stretched, “I feel better,” and began to drink his tea. Then, quite suddenly, as the cup fell crashing and unnoticed to the ground, Mr. Warlingham found his brow wet. Somebody was standing at the foot of his bed. He clenched his fists, staring. Yes, this was no illusion. The door had not opened, and yet a man stood looking at him with a disagreeable expression. Mr. Warlingham made a violent effort to speak, but found his tongue palsied. Then a voice, the familiar voice that had haunted him, grew audible:

“Well,” said the shape. “Surprised to see me, I suppose.” Mr. Warlingham did not reply. “You've given me a lot of trouble,” the Thing went on; “materialising

isn't as easy as you novelists make out. When I think of the weeks of bother I've had over this business, I've a good mind . . ." It visibly snarled. "Still, that's not what I've really come for. Warlingham, that ending of yours is nonsense. Bunkum. Pure bunkum."

"What do you want?" asked Mr. Warlingham feebly, for this insult to his literary powers galvanised him.

"I want you to alter the ending. And you'll do it, sure as my name's Perez."

Mr. Warlingham still stared at the Thing. Perez! He had known at once that tall, black-bearded shape with the lustrous, dark eyes, had recognised the full trousers and the scarlet sash. His buccaneer! But this was awful. Was he going mad? Perez was talking again.

"Look here," he said. "I've got no time to waste. It's all I can do to hold my molecules together, so let's get down to business. That ending of yours is bunkum because I didn't die. Understand? *I didn't die*. It's quite true that Moreno, whom you have the audacity to call my friend, the scab who cheated me out of thirty-three dollars at euchre last night, so that I had to let the moonlight through him . . . Well, Moreno, as I was saying, carried me in. But that's where what you call your imagination failed. Mercedes was in the house; for a fortnight she fed me on milk and I got perfectly well. As soon as I felt strong enough I murdered her and took charge of her savings, which I am glad to say were considerable."

"You . . . murdered the woman who saved your life!" cried Mr. Warlingham, his fear expelled by surprise.

"Of course. You may think it ungrateful of me. But I'm not a respectable character; you made me like that, and if I killed Mercedes it's your fault."

"Well! I like your cheek," said Mr. Warlingham. "You say that Mercedes . . ."

"I'm tired of Mercedes," grumbled Perez. "And don't interrupt. With her savings I went to Mexico city and bought myself a small saloon at No. 11, Calle Berganza. I'm doing quite well; I've a man to help me, and by and by I expect to develop a bit. Before I'm done I'll be running a big café; I'll call it the Cafe Warlingham. I'll always be pleased to see you. My place is near the street car depot. So you see your ending won't do."

For a moment Mr. Warlingham was silent. He was still frightened, but interested. "All this," he said, loftily, "has nothing to do with me."

"Nothing to do with you? Don't be silly. You've no right to create a character and end him up wrong. Especially you've no right to kill him off to save yourself the trouble of writing a few hundred pages more."

"I'd like to see you do it," protested Mr. Warlingham. "You talk as if one could write a few hundred pages in a week."

"Nothing to do with me. Anyhow I didn't die. I'm alive to-day, so your ending isn't true; it isn't artistic truth."

"What!" shouted Mr. Warlingham, springing up in bed, "you dare to stand there and lecture me on artistic truth. Please remember whom you're talking to."

"Don't brag; keep that for Miss Medhurst. Obviously the ending's inartistic; if you'll just look up Chapter VIII and observe the psychology of . . ."

Here the discussion grew confused, and Mr. Warlingham found himself at a disadvantage, for Perez knew a great many things about the psychology of the other characters (and of Perez) which had never occurred to the novelist. They ended by shouting.

"Thoroughly inartistic . . ."

"I know more about novels than you'll . . ."

"I want another seven chapters at least."

"Leave the room at once, sir."

There was a tap at the door. As Mr. Warlingham sank down upon the pillow the valet came in and said: "Your bath is ready, sir," then withdrew, Perez being obviously invisible to him.

"All right," said Perez. "Go and have your bath. I know you think best in your bath. Besides, every molecule of me is aching, so I'll dissolve for an hour or so. But," he added, threateningly, "I'll come back and resume the discussion. I'll teach you . . ." He began to grow dim. "You'll thank me for this some day." The voice grew faint. "I'll teach you artistic truth."

III

"Mr. Warlingham," said Miss Medhurst as she buttoned her gloves prior to going out to lunch, "please don't think me impertinent, but I'm sure you're working too hard. You *must* have a holiday."

"You mean," said the novelist in an acid tone, "that my work isn't up to standard."

"I don't mean anything of the kind," protested the little spinster. "I think you're wonderful. Only I thought yesterday, and again this morning . . . well, you know you had to stop dictating, and . . ."

"Yes, I know, I know." Mr. Warlingham had indeed been paralysed for several minutes while Perez stood behind Miss Medhurst's chair and made ferocious faces. When at last Mr. Warlingham decided to affront him and tremblingly resumed an incoherent dictation, Perez had punctuated every other sentence with loud cries of "Rot!"

while Miss Medhurst shrank from her author's livid face. "Inspiration," she thought, "is a beautiful, terrible thing."

"Just for a few days." Miss Medhurst's tone grew wheedling, and as she bent forward her yellow-grey eyes grew tender. "In the country. Think of it; here is the spring. Daffodils, primroses and . . . daffodils in the fields."

"Perhaps I will," said Mr. Warlingham harshly. "I'll see whether he . . . I mean, I'll see how I feel."

But the days that followed brought no improvement in Mr. Warlingham's condition. Perez had begun by appearing twice in one day; within a week he took to materialising every four hours or so. This seemed to please the phantom: "I say, Warlie, old boy," he remarked as he leant against the tobacconist's counter while his victim tried to buy cigarettes, "this materialising isn't as difficult as it looks. It's a matter of practice; now that I know how to control my molecules I can bring it off every two hours. In time I may be able to keep it up day and night; then I'll never have to leave you at all."

Mr. Warlingham groaned and rushed out of the shop, leaving his change in front of the amazed salesman, Perez running by his side with long, easy strides.

"Steady," said the phantom, "there's no hurry. You won't get away from me."

Soon Mr. Warlingham realised that Perez was right. He appeared in the Park and followed his author all the way to the publisher, arguing incessantly. He was beginning to develop theories. "You've made a mess of the whole thing," said Perez. "On thinking it over carefully I don't think I should have killed Pepita before eloping with Inez. As for Isabel, I rather think I shot her father, so you should say in Chapter V . . ."

"I wish you'd go away," moaned Mr. Warlingham. "If you go on bothering me I'll burn the book and you'll be snuffed out."

"I shan't. You'll write it over again in the right way. Now, Warlie, pull yourself together. I'll make a celebrity of you when you've learned artistic truth."

Thereupon followed acrid argument, for Mr. Warlingham no longer feared Perez; he merely looked upon him as an intolerable nuisance whose library criticisms outraged his pride. But on this occasion the victim soon was silenced, for a policeman turned round and stared at Mr. Warlingham told the empty air not to be a fool. As time passed the oppressor almost realised his threats; his molecular control became so great that in one day he managed to lunch with Mr. Warlingham, to make a fifth at bridge (which cost Mr. Warlingham a good deal of money and the friendship of his partner) and to enter a crowded omnibus where he sat upon an unmoved old lady and loudly lectured the apparently blind and deaf passengers on the defects of Mr. Warlingham's style. The author felt a dull brutalisation creep over him; Miss Medhurst openly wept. "He doesn't seem to care about anything," she whimpered to herself; "I don't think he hears."

She was wrong. Mr. Warlingham heard too much. His ruddy colour was leaving him, and his waistcoat began to sag. "I'm wasting away," he thought, and did not care. But his nervous system was working independently of his will, and only his pride forbade that he should surrender to the ever more insistent Perez; an incident brought about the breakdown. Mr. Warlingham went to a fashionable lunch party and found himself seated between a very pretty American Duchess and a well-known actress. Anxious to make himself agreeable

he garnished his conversation with epigrams, and for a time all went well; he was alone. Who could say? Perhaps it was all over. Then he saw Perez, seated on the rose bowl, his heavy boots in the middle of a basket of crystallised violets. He seemed to enjoy the scene, but as Mr. Warlingham remarked: "Don't do unto others as you would be done by, for they may not have the same taste," the phantom informed the party that the epigram was not by Mr. Warlingham, but by Mr. Bernard Shaw. For a few minutes the novelist ground his teeth and plodded on his witty way, but the shameless Perez gravely followed every epigram by: "As Whistler put it," or "That's the best thing Anatole France ever said"; at last Mr. Warlingham grew blackly silent. Later the American Duchess confided to her husband that after the first ten minutes well-known novelists turned out to be dull dogs. Meanwhile Mr. Warlingham sat in his study, his face in his hands, while Miss Medhurst fluttered about him. "Tell me what's the matter," she implored. Mr. Warlingham looked at her wildly; perhaps something of her immense tenderness touched him, for suddenly he spoke:

"Don't think me mad. . . . I don't know what to do. It keeps following me about, and arguing. Oh, what shall I do?" The horror of the past days was released as he told Miss Medhurst everything, little details of time and place, literary arguments the phantom had used, and gripping the wiry little hand that trembled and yielded he cried out as a child: "Oh, I'm right, I'm right, tell me I'm right."

"Yes," whispered Miss Medhurst. "Of course you're right. Who could teach you anything? Don't alter your novel; it doesn't belong to you, it belongs to humanity. But you are overwrought, worn out. I'm going to

pack for you, and you must go to the seaside for a week. Promise?"

Mr. Warlingham nodded. He did not notice that for a moment his secretary laid upon his arm fingers light as a butterfly's wing.

A week later Miss Medhurst entered the study, her heart beating. Oh, how ill he looked! "Well?" she asked tensely.

"It's no good," said Mr. Warlingham in a gloomy tone. "Perez and I went . . . bathing."

For a moment Miss Medhurst was tempted to laugh, then was ashamed. This was terrible. The man chosen of the muses was dying before her eyes; worse, his reason was dying, because of a wretched illusion. Oh, if she could only take it upon herself! She wrung her little hard hands, and as she peered into corners, seized by a sense of the uncanny, the hatred of a true partisan held her: if only Perez could appear to her . . . she would outrage him, blot him out. Yes, blot him out. The words raised in the little spinster an incredible excitement; medical memories taken from the newspapers invaded her mind, wonderful cures brought about by suggestion, by self-suggestion. *By self-suggestion!* Aghast at her own audacity she put her hand on the stricken man's shoulder.

"Mr. Warlingham," she whispered, "do you hear me? It is an illusion. Do you understand it is an illusion?"

"Yes," said the novelist, without raising his eyes.

"Then if it is an illusion, let us face it. Prove to yourself that it is only an illusion."

"Prove?" uttered Mr. Warlingham. "How?"

"He said he lived in Mexico, that he kept a saloon. Well . . . go and see. Go to Mexico."

"Go to Mexico," shouted Mr. Warlingham, leaping to his feet.

"Yes. Go. Go and see. It's an illusion. When you get there, very likely you'll find a bank at the address he gave you. And then you'll know it was only an illusion. You'll be free."

Mr. Warlingham thought for a long time, then gently took her hand and said: "Perhaps you're right. But don't let me go alone. Come with me."

IV

A sickly man wrapped in a travelling rug staggered on to the platform, hanging with a curious air of helplessness to the arm of a slim, capable little woman. Behind them, in procession, came several swarthy porters laden with baggage; the commissioner of the *Hotel de las Cuatro Naciones*, disguised as a full general, led the way. The little woman erupted into the Spanish she had acquired on board ship, directed the porters to wait with the *equipaje*, gave the commissioner five pesos to help the heavy luggage through the customs, and gently led the grey-faced man to the waiting omnibus.

"Now, Mr. Warlingham," she said, briskly, half an hour later. "You must stay in bed and rest. Nothing can be done to-day; first you must sleep. I must go to my hotel, but I'll come back for dinner. You'll stay in bed? Promise?"

"All right," said Mr. Warlingham, wearily. He shut his eyes as if half-asleep or exhausted. With a sudden fond gesture Miss Medhurst smoothed the creases from the pillow and left the room.

But she stayed only a few minutes at her hotel, just long enough to wash her thin, intelligent face, and to smile as she powdered her nose, for this was a new habit. For a moment, on the steps, she shrank from the broad ex-

panse of the *plaza*, crowded with black-garbed men crowned by sombreros, bare-headed women whose hair shone like oiled silk, lounging *peones*, wild, half-Indian, always about to be run over by the prancing buggy horses or the clanging electric cars. Then she clenched her little fists and called a cab. Her course was fixed in advance: the driver must carry her to a church selected from the plan of Mexico City and must inevitably pass through the Calle Berganza; yet she would not arouse suspicion by naming the street of doom. Her excitement was so powerful that the broad, white streets became to her mere symbols. She saw only name plates: *C. de Tampico* . . . *C. de Santa Fe* . . . then at last, in a mist, *C. Berganza* . . . 27 . . . 25 . . . a little street of old, mean houses . . . 19 . . . a dog rooting in a dustbin . . . 13 . . .

She passed number 11, was conscious horribly of the bush over the door. Indeed it was not a bank, but a little bar. Miss Medhurst ground her teeth, as she dropped her sunshade in the road, stopped the driver by a violent tug at the coat-tail (for not a word of Spanish could she remember), leaped out, ran back. As she bent she stared into the little bar. For a moment she could see nothing through the dirty pans, then a shape. Miss Medhurst tottered as she walked away with the sunshade: she had recognised the tall, dark man, with the soft eyes and the black beard.

All through the night Miss Medhurst tossed in the high Spanish bed. Perez! It was Perez. It was madness, death for Mr. Warlingham. Miss Medhurst wept into the pillow, bit it so as not to scream. And later she lit all the candles, seized by the dread of the supernatural. When morning came and she crept to the *Cuatro Naciones* she was paler than Mr. Warlingham. As she came in he was speaking to the shade, and for a moment she thought

that she too could now glimpse Perez against the flowered curtain. Mad! Both mad! But a savage purpose told her to gain time, to make Mr. Warlingham dress, to drive him wildly through the town, into the suburbs, only to gain time to think. The novelist did not resist, seemed to have lost even the desire to hasten to the place of trial, or to flee from it. Obediently, when lunch was done, he lay down for a siesta. All he said was:

"If you're going out, remember this is Mexico and take your revolver." He had given her the weapon and loaded it himself. For Mr. Warlingham's novels were slightly sensational, and he expected life to equal them. Miss Medhurst went out into the heat that struck up from the stones (she remembered Mr. Warlingham's metaphor) like a heavy hand. She hardly felt it, nor the molten shafts of light from the purple sky. She sped through the desert streets, a grim, earnest little figure, careless of sights, on the route of yesterday. At the corner of Calle Berganza she paused, then ran. Number 11 stood open, and without an apparent tremor she went in. As her eyes, sunblind, recovered sight, she took in the few details, the wooden tables, the few iron chairs, the counter, the arm-chair on which slumbered the man of destiny. Her limbs shook, but Miss Medhurst rapped a table with her knuckles until Perez half opened his eyes.

"*Te!*" she said harshly, "*con leche.*"

Perez stared at her. Tea? with milk? At half-past two? He expressed this view. Also the *mozo* had gone home for a siesta. He was alone in the café.

"*Te con leche,*" snapped Miss Medhurst.

Perez reflected that she was English, therefore a lunatic, therefore also rich, and after some time brought in an amazingly vile liquid. The little spinster watched his face, his hands. "Am I mad?" she thought. Then: "No, it

is he." She drank the tea. She had nothing to say. This was the end. And yet she could not go. Time, gain time; she must. Desperately she asked if this were an old inn.

"*No se*," replied Perez sleepily.

She found herself explaining that her employer was an antiquarian who studied old inns. Might she visit the inn? Perez was about to refuse, but observed in Miss Medhurst's hand a twenty pesos note. Lunatic, he thought, shrugged his shoulders, and led the way up steep wooden stairs.

They stood in a dark, shuttered bedroom. A carved oak chest ran up to the black beams. On the mantelpiece stood a cheap statuette of a saint. In an alcove she saw the high, white bed.

"The carpet," said Perez, proudly pointing at the horror from Brussels, "is new." He turned to her, smiling. She did not know what had happened. She did not know what she did. She heard a shot, a cry, found herself, laughing and crying, on her knees by the side of the man she had slain, found her tiny strength tenfold multiplied as she hauled him to the bed, set upon the pillow the limp head. But before she fled through the lonely, brilliant streets, she thrust the revolver into the relaxed hand.

She found Mr. Warlingham up and excited.

"Where have you been all this time? I've been waiting," he cried, crossly. "I feel so funny. I was talking to him a quarter of an hour ago, and he vanished in the middle of a word. Oh, I feel so ill."

"Come with me," said Miss Medhurst, firmly. "Come now. I have found the way. Now! quick; hurry!"

Her new cunning told her to make him walk to arouse no notice. That cunning led her and her trembling charge into the bar where a dirty *mozo* now sat and smoked. It

told her to make her scanty Spanish incomprehensible, until at last the *mozo* said he must fetch his master. He called up the wooden stairs, and Miss Medhurst's fingers entered like claws into Mr. Warlingham's arm. There was no reply. "*Señor!*" called the *mozo* again. Again no reply. The man's feet sounded loud as he went up the stairs. A moment later they heard him cry out, and as if drawn by a predominant will they ran up the stairs.

"Ah!" screamed the waiter.

But there was no horror in Mr. Warlingham's face. With enraptured eyes he gazed at the long, red-sashed body, at the black beard that stood erect, outlined against the pillow. Colour had rushed into his cheeks. He looked erect, confident in his fame.

"I was right!" he cried. "It was artistic truth!" His voice rose; he shouted into a realm now devoid of phantoms. "I was right! Right! Artistically right!"

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

GEORGE'S GENDER

"PUT the cushion on the rail of the fender and hit it hard. Wait a minute. I'll lie in the fender. Help me down."

George lowered the woman courteously into the ashpan.

"Now yell a bit. Say 'Damn!' I'll scream. . . . Go on. Bang away at the cushion. Here they come. Bang away."

George smote the cushion and kicked the fender and said "Damn!" iteratively. The woman rattled the brass fireguard and screamed. The strange sound seemed to madden George, and he pranced upon the hearthrug, his spectacles leaping and tossing from his nose.

The door swung open, and two maids, one young and pretty and the other old and large, stood gazing at the sordid scene. George turned and shook his poker at them.

"You brute! You brute!" shrieked the larger hireling. She seized a chair by its laddered back and held it high over her head.

"Yes, you're a brute; a wretch of a brute," assented the pretty housemaid, the air whistling in and out of her dainty little nose.

"Ah! Ah-r-r-rh!" yelled George. "Get out; get out."



BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

© E. O. Hoppe

"The police, Ivy; the police. Run along quick. There's always one on the pillar box corner." The woman in the ash-pan groaned.

"Help me up, Clark! Help me up."

Clark, with uplifted chair drove her master before her and reached the fender. George gave way willingly, and fled round the dining-room table to the door just in time to prevent Ivy, the housemaid, from indulging in the congenial pursuit of a policeman.

"Stand away from that door," he cried, "or I shall treat you as I have treated that—other—woman!" Ivy squealed, and locked her arms round herself.

"Don't—fetch—the—police—not the police." The moan came from the direction of the fireplace. Ivy darted back into the room, slammed the door and turned the key on the inside. Then she went to her prostrate mistress's side, and in company with the older and larger Clark, sobbed over her.

George snatched up a hat and went half-way to his club with the poker under his arm.

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George and Agnes Bracegreek, although married, were a devoted couple. She had very much wanted to marry him, as he had taught her biology, and it would have killed her, she felt, to spend life with anybody who did not understand its science. Bracegreek was a great biologist who did not desire marriage, but was much too good-natured to refuse his name and a share of his earnings to an earnest admirer. Moreover, he reflected that matrimony would to some extent protect him from a good deal of the embarrassing enthusiasms of his lady pupils. Agnes was a girl with a nice voice and attractive eyes, though after twenty years' married life he could not visu-

alise her appearance when he was away from her. She had kissed him—when last?—but he had never kissed her. When he felt pleasantly disposed towards her, he would dig two fingers of his right hand against a shiny black belt which she invariably wore. They were perfectly happy.

When Agnes was exactly forty-two years of age another man came into her life. He was a friend of George's, a man who had joined the West African Frontier Force to escape from the London daily newspapers. He was tall and fair, whereas the George of her hand was stooping and chrome-grey. He had not much to say for himself, and his boots looked as if they had been cleaned by their owner; but, beyond a shadow of doubt, he had personality. On rare occasions in conversation or discussion he would advance a theory or an argument and then fall on it. This carried conviction because he was too big to be lifted, and the opinion he had expressed solidified under him.

Then he brought a whiff of the exotic which would make a nun wistful. What was all this about "taboo" and why did George and Cyril—his name was Cyril Curtis-Wood, but in Nairobi they called him "Lulu"—break off their Nigerian conversations sometimes when she entered the room? She liked it, but why?

Cyril was undoubtedly a man of honor. He fell instantly in love with Agnes Bracegreek, although she wore jet and a shiny black belt and a sort of dog's muzzle on her hair. But no revelation of any sort did he permit himself till well nigh five out of his six months' leave had elapsed. In these five months he had discovered that George and Agnes were no more and never had been more than companions, and he had no scruples about tendering to Agnes the love he had to give, and to which, by the

laws of the jungle when the grass was cut, she was entitled.

Agnes listened to his confession with the air of a maiden courted at her first dance.

"Of course," said she, when she had kissed assent to her Cyril, "you must ask George."

"I intend to treat your husband with consideration. I feel that we can rely on his behaving splendidly."

That evening the love tale was unfolded to the husband of Agnes, and his mild blue eyes softened with pleasure. He had adjudged from the literature which he found about the house—"Ann Veronica" and "The Pretty Lady"—that his wife had ill-concealed romanticist tendencies, and that, in spite of his own exclusiveness, selfish aversion from social intercourse and positive horror of hospitality, she had fared successfully on the world's highway towards the goal of love, gave him a satisfaction which was none the less agreeable because it was ill-earned. Well done, Agnes; indeed well done! And she should be Mrs. Curtis-Wood, and the cost of her maintenance might be diverted to the support of a new section of Mollusca in the zoological division of his institute.

Cyril looked hard at Agnes, and searched his mind. But his love was true, and he reflected upon the fact that George was an asexual being. Agnes certainly dressed queerly, but that was because love was not there to inspire, and her figure was entrancing. George wore trousers with a sort of cork-screw seam—he seemed to have to unscrew them before he could sit down—and this was eloquent of his inability to assay the feminine. Agnes was to George, anyone could see, a sister, or a housekeeper, a mother or a landlady, a private secretary or a cash register. A woman who lived with George was staking with the pari mutuel instead of the bookmaker. George had no gender.

The only difficulty in the way of fulfilment of love's middle-aged dream was the divorce.

George said: "You and Cyril will go away and stay together at an hotel. I will receive an anonymous letter, and will go and search you out. I am willing to faint in the lobby in order to deceive the King's Proctor, and that ought to complete the matter."

Cyril said: "That sounds good enough, and I suggest we toss up who pays the law costs."

Agnes said: "I am horrified that you suggest such a thing, George. Cyril and I are pure, and shall remain pure. My father, if not a clergyman, neither drank nor smoked, and I would not gratify my wish to marry Cyril at the expense of my conscience. I shall not be divorced. If I were, I could never look Cyril in the face again. Yes, I know I might be innocent, but every time Cyril looked at me I should wince. The world's view of it all would be in his head. He would be the only person on earth—with the exception of you—who would regard me as a respectable woman. Two aren't enough, believe me, George."

"Then I suppose I must be the guilty party," gasped George. Agnes said yes, and Cyril wished there was another way out.

"B-but I don't know how it may not hit me in my profession," protested George. "It may seem absurd to you, but a knowledge of anthropology is pretty nearly useless to a roué. If I'm divorced, I shall lecture on ethnology to empty benches."

Agnes said he would not want so much money, now that he had not a wife to keep, and that in course of time he was sure to live down the unpleasantness. Cyril thought it possible that an undefended case might not get into the papers. George shook his head sadly, but such

was the generosity of his heart that he consented in the end not only to part with his wife, but to bear all the opprobrium that the legislation of the parting would entail.

It was necessary for George to desert his wife, to be cruel to her, and to appear to be unfaithful. The desertion part was easily arranged. George took a room in Streatham, and travelled to and from it in abject misery each day. As people are generally so vague about this district, Agnes could safely swear that she did not know where George was. And most certainly George did not know.

The cruelty, after a few rehearsals, was performed to the entire conviction of the maids, and it now remained for George to compromise himself with another lady.

George frankly detested this part of the programme. Like all kindly men he was very sensitive, and the prospect of spending a night in the society of a disreputable female caused him to writhe in misery.

"Oh, I know, my dear, that it's only a matter of form. I know perfectly well that I shall lie on the couch fully dressed all night, and that she—this phantom, incredible she!—will have the bed all to herself. But I shan't sleep. I shall never be able to close my eyes. Imagine my mental agony. I shall be a raving lunatic long before dawn."

"It seems to me," commented Cyril, "that it all depends on the personality of your companion. A coarse creature of the street would surely have a terrible effect on your mentality, but what if she were—well, a lady, some friend who would oblige for the occasion?"

"Exactly," said Agnes. "How about Mrs. Capp-Whisthaugh? She's a widow and a woman of the world, they say."

"I detest her. She'd want to play draughts all night. I know her sort. Besides, Agnes, how can I write to a lady and ask her to spend a night with me in an hotel bedroom. You two are so much in love that you are becoming positively selfish."

Agnes pointed out that no letter need be written, that an understanding friend might have the position explained to her verbally. If she were made to appreciate that her identity would never be revealed, her sympathy might induce her to assent. At any rate, everyone must be calm. As George had brought off the desertion and the cruelty so well, it would be cowardly of him to be baffled by the—er—final step.

But just as Agnes had been adamant in the matter of her eloping with Cyril, so was George resolved in this matter of his companion for the night. Suggestion after suggestion was made by both Agnes and Cyril, each to be ruthlessly condemned. George said that he had never realised that such an ordeal would be required of him. He had imagined that it would be sufficient to suborn some rascally hotel-keeper and sign a couple of names in his guest book. The fact that he would be called upon to occupy a room all night with any other woman but his wife, had, he warmly protested, never been revealed to him.

.

A few nights later Agnes went to bed early. She found excuses to bring both her maids into her room so that they should see that she was in bed on that particular night. Then, waiting till the house was quiet, and till she was quite positive that her servants were asleep, she arose.

From newly arrived boxes she took gay clothing. See

this high heel, that flimsy stocking! Note the brevity of this jaunty skirt, the cosiness of this silver fur! Above all, contemplate the allure of this daring hat!

Agnes dressed her hair carefully from a model depicted in a weekly paper. It drooped delightfully to her eyebrows and hid half of her ears. She powdered her cheeks, and flicked her lips and eyelashes with colour.

Next she surrounded her graceful figure with the pretty clothing in the boxes. She took a handbag and fresh gloves, and stood before a long mirror. Agnes was no more. Here stood a bright, perhaps too bright, and decidedly alluring little woman, whose errors in taste might be forgiven for her ambition to be attractive.

Agnes looked at herself and liked herself. She reflected that the trappings of gaiety were much easier to assume than those of virtue, and then sighed that these pretty things should be only for the light of heart. What did the others get? A memory of the seaside occurred to her. What was it—"A mug for a good girl." Ah, yes.

.

George met his wife at a dark corner off Tottenham Court Road. At first he would not know her, but she murmured his name softly. He shuddered, stared long and whitely at her alluring clothes, and then muttered, "It's down here." He moved away.

She followed him. The man looked positively ill, and Agnes became alarmed.

"Don't look so miserable," she begged. "They will suspect something. Remember you said you'd stay the night with no other woman. I had to disguise myself. It tortures me just as it tortures you. But you agreed to the idea. Oh, George, for goodness' sake, try to cheer up and look reckless."

They were near to the hotel. With a great mental effort George recovered himself. He put his silk hat on one side of his head and opened his coat to show off his dress shirt and thrust a red and gold banded cigar into a corner of his mouth.

"Mr. and Mrs. Bracegreek," he signed the register. Both the greasy hotel-keeper and the page would certainly be able to testify afterwards that this was not the Mrs. Bracegreek whom counsel would indicate in court.

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Cyril came to tea the next day. He was most anxious to hear the result of the plan, but had felt that it would be hardly discreet to telephone on the subject.

He had expected, naturally, to find Agnes alone. But George was with her. Moreover, Agnes was wearing a lot of fresh clothes which made her look startlingly different.

"I've decided not to divorce George after all," said Agnes sweetly, as she handed her ex-lover a cup of tea.



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VIOLET HUNT

From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

VIOLET HUNT

THE COACH

It was in a part of the country so far north that the summer nights are pale and light and scant of shade, and even when there is no moon, it is not dark. This night for hours the flat, depreciating earth had lain prone under a storm of wind and rain, its patient surface drenched, blanched, smitten into blindness. The tumbled waters of the Firth that splashed on the edges of the plain were daunted by the wind-driven showers; gloomy drops tapped them into sullen acquiescence. Half a mile inland the road to the north was laid and ran with never a house or homestead to break it, viscous with clay here, shining with quartz there, exact, uncompromising, hedgeless, between its borders of short scant grass. Very seldom the un-deviating line of it passed through a coppice or little clump of gnarled, ill-conditioned, nameless trees that seemed to lean forward vindictively on either side, snapping their horny fingers at each other, waving their cantankerous branches as the gusts took them, broke them, and whirled the fragments of their ruin far away and out of ken, as a kite that a child has allowed to pass beyond his control. Nor was the white surface of the road blotted for a single moment, swept and cleared by the play of the air-currents, surging backwards and forwards, blind, stupid and swelled with pride of power. Completely out of hand,

intriguing but ineffectual giants, these forces of the sky staggered hither and thither, buffeting all impartially, instigating the hapless branches at their mercy to wild lashings of each other, to useless accesses of the spirit of self-destruction. Bending slavishly under the heavy gusts, each shabby blade of grass by the roadside rose again and was on the *qui vive* after the rustling tyrants had passed.

It was then, in the succeeding moments of comparative peace, when the directors of the passionate aerial revolt had managed to call their panting rabble off for the time, that great perpendicular sheets of rain, like stage films, slung evenly from the pillars that upbore the heavens, descended and began moving continuously sideways, like a wall, across the level track. A sheet of whole water blotted out the tangled border of herbage; the heaps of stones set at intervals ready for breaking. When the slab of rain had moved on again, the road, shining out sturdily with its embedded quartz and milky kneaded clay, lay clear once more. Calm, ordered and tranquil in the midst of tumult and discord, it pursued its appointed course, edging off from its sloping, evenly bevelled sides the noisy moorland streams, that had come jostling each other in their haste to reach it, only to be relegated, noisily complaining by the unrecognisable camber of the gutter.

At a certain point on the line of way, a tall, spare, respectable-looking man in a well-fitting grey frock coat stood like a weary, foredone clerk waiting at the corner of the city street for the omnibus that was to carry him home to his slippered comfort and sober pipe of peace. The rain dripped peaceably off the rim of his top hat and ran down his coat collar. He wore no muffler, but then it was summer—St. John's Eve. He leaned on an ivory-headed ebony stick of which he seemed fond, and peered, not very eagerly, along the road, which now—for there was a lull

in the storm—lay in dazzling rain-washed clarity under the struggling moon. He had no luggage, no umbrella, yet his grey coat looked neat, and his hat shiny.

Far in the distance, from the south, a dark, clumsy object appeared, labouring slowly along—a coach, of heavy and antique pattern. As soon as he had sighted it, the passenger's faint interest seemed diminished. With a bored air of fulfilment, he dropped his eyes and looked down disapprovingly at the clayey mud at his feet, although, indeed, the sticky substance did not appear to have marred the exquisite polish of his shoes. His palm rested composedly on the ivory knob of his trusty stick, as it were the hand of an old friend.

With some signs of difficult going, but no noise of straining or grinding, the coach drew up in front of the expectant passenger. He looked up quietly, and recognised it as the vehicle wherein it was appointed that he should travel for a stage, or two, maybe. All was correct, the coachman, grave, business-like, headless as of usage, the horses long-tailed, black, conventional. . . .

The door opened noiselessly, and the step was let down. Nodding at the coachman, he delicately put his foot on to it; he observed for the benefit of the persons inside:

"I see old Joe on the box in his official trim. Rather unnecessary, all this ceremony, I venture to think! A few yokels and old women to impress, if indeed, anyone not positively obliged, is abroad on a night like this! For form's sake, I suppose!"

He took his seat next the window. The four occupants of the coach nodded, some stiffly, but not unkindly. He returned their salutations in a way that showed him unacquainted with any of them.

Sitting next to him was a woman evidently of fashion. Her heavy and valuable furs were cast on one side, to

show a wide breast covered with jewels. She wore two enamelled and jewel-encrusted watches pinned to her bosom as a mark for thieves to covet. It was foolish of her, the man in the grey frock coat thought. Her yellow wig was much awry. Her eyes were weak, stained, and fearful, and she aided their vision with a diamond-beset pince-nez. Now and again she glanced over her left shoulder as if in alarm, and at such times grasped her gold-net reticule feverishly. She was obviously a rich woman, a first-class, train-de-luxe, passenger.

The woman opposite her belonged, he considered, to the people, hard-featured, worn with a life of sordid toil and calculation, but withal stout and motherly, a figure to inspire the fullest confidence. She wore a black bonnet with strings, and black silk gloves heavily darned. Round her sunken white collar, a golden gleam of watch-chain was now and then discernible.

At the other end of the coach, squeezed up into the corner where the vacillating light of the lamp hung from the roof least penetrated, a neat, sharp-featured man nestled or hid. His forehead retreated, and his bowler hat was set far back, lending him an air of folly and congenital weakness which his long, cold, clever nose set in a face white as old enamel, could not dissipate.

But the man whom the gentleman in the frock coat took to among his casual fellow-travellers was the one directly opposite him, a rough, hearty creature. Alone of all the taciturn coachful he seemed disposed to enter into conversation which might enliven the dreariness entailed by this old-fashioned mode of travelling. Gay talk might help to drown the dashing of the waters of the Firth lying close on the right hand of the road they were even now traversing, and the ugly roar of the wind and rain against the windows. This—by comparison—cheerful fellow

was dressed in a shabby suit of corduroys. He wore no collar; a twisted red cotton handkerchief was wound tightly round his thick squat neck. His little mean eyes swinish, but twinkling good-humouredly, stared enviously at the gentleman's stiff collar and the delicate grey tones of his suiting. Crossing and uncrossing his creasy legs, in the unusual effort of conviviality, the man in corduroys addressed the man in the frock coat:

"Well, mate! They've chosen a rare rough night to shift us on! Orders from headquarters, I suppose? I've been here nigh on a year and never set eyes on my boss!"

"We used to call him God the Father," said the elder man rather coldly. . . . "But there is no earthly sense in questioning the arrangements of Him who orders our ways down here; we can only fall in with them. Perhaps you do not as yet conceive fully of the silent impelling force that sways us. It is the same in the world we have left, only that there we were only concerned with the titles and standing of our 'boss,' as you call Him, and obeyed His laws not a whit. I must say I consider this system of yearly soul transference that we have to submit to, very unsettling and productive of restlessness among us—a mere survival of superstition—tiresome and affected to my mind. But one merit it has; one sees something of the under world travelling about as we do, and meeting chance, perhaps kindred spirits on the road. One realises, too, that Hades is not quite as grey, shall I say, as it is painted! I fear," he added, with a slight touch of class hauteur, "you do not quite follow me?"

"Oh, yes, master, I do," eagerly replied the fellow-traveller to whom he chose to address his monologue. "Since I've been dead, I have learned the meaning of many things. I turn up my nose at nothing these days. I always neglected my schooling, but now I tell you I try

to make up for lost time. From a rough sort of fellow that I was, with not an idea in my head beyond my beer and my prog, I have come to take my part in the whole of knowledge. It was all mine before, so to speak, but I didn't trouble to put my hand out for it. Didn't care, didn't listen to Miss that taught me, or to Parson, either. Parson had some good ideas too, as I've come to know, though his Vice isn't exactly our Vice now, in a manner of speaking. If God Almighty made us, why did He make us, even in parts, bad? That's what I want to know, and I'll know that when I've been dead a bit longer. Why did He give me rotten teeth so that I couldn't chew properly and didn't care for my food and liked drink better? It's dirt and digestion makes drinking and devilry, I say."

The smart woman interrupted him with a kind of languid eagerness, exclaiming:

"I must say I agree with you. Since the pestle fell on my shoulder in that lonely villa at Monte, I have realised what the dreadful gambling fever may lead to. It had turned those two who wanted my guilty gains into wild beasts! To tell the truth, I ought never to have accepted their invitation to luncheon, never tempted them with my display of jewels! . . . And alas! I was tarred with the same stick: I gambled too——"

She rummaged in her reticule and fished out a ticket for the Rooms at Monte Carlo.

"I always call that the ticket for my execution. I had earned it. And although my executioners were rather brutal, they will attain unto this place more easily than I did, and will have hardly any pain, I am told. The arm of the law is gentle, compared with that of Sir——"

The man in the grey frock coat raised his finger warningly. "No names, I beg. One of our little conventions. . . .!"

"Have a drop?" said the calm motherly woman to the excited fine lady. "Your wound is recent, isn't it? Yours was a very severe case! A bloody murder, I call it, if ever there was one, and clumsy at that! And you only passive, which is always so much harder, they say! I can't tell, for I was what you may call an active party. They don't seem to mind mixing, them that looks after us here! Lump us all together—in travelling, at any rate! Though when I think of what I was actually turned off for, well—the way I look at it, what I did was a positive benefit to Society, and some sections of Society knew it, too, and would have liked to preserve my life."

"But what, Madam, if I may ask, was your little difficulty?"

"It is called, I believe, baby farming," she replied off-handedly, receiving her flask back from the smart woman and stowing it away in a capacious pocket. A shudder like a ripple on a rain-swept stream came over her hearers, with the exception of the thin man in the far corner, who preserved his calm. Raising his sunken chin, he observed the lady with some interest. But the gentleman in grey apologised.

"Excuse us, Madam. A remnant of old-world squeamishness, uncontrollable by us for the moment. Though, if you would, perhaps you could somewhat dissipate our preconceived notions of your profession, by explaining clearly your ancient point of view."

"Delighted, I'm sure," she answered. "Funny, though, how seriously you all take it, even here! The feeling against my profession seems as absurdly strong below as it was above. I was hooted as I left the court, I recollect. It annoyed me then considerably. I thought them that hooted had more need to be grateful to me if all was known and paid for. I saved their pockets for them

and their lovely honour too. They knew they had to thank me for that, and for the rest, Lord! what did they care? They went on, bless 'em, raising up seed for me to mow down as soon as its head came above ground, and welcome! Sly dogs, no thanks from them! But those shivering, shrinking women that came to me, some of them hardly out of their teens, some of them so delicate they had no right to have a baby at all! Ah, if only I hadn't let myself take their money it would have been a work of what they call philanthropy. But I had to live, then. Now that one is relieved of that duty one has time to think it out. But Lord!—Society, to cry shame on me! They might as well hang any other useful public servant, like dustmen, rat-catchers, and such-like ridders of pests. Good old Herod, that I used to hear about at school, knew what he was doing when he cleared off all those useless Innocents! He was the first baby farmer, I guess."

"You take large ground, Madam," said the man in the frock coat.

"And I have the right," said she, her determined chin pointing from its rolls of fat, in her eagerness. "You men ought to know it, and you do well enough, when you're honest with yourselves. I was only the 'scape-goat,' and took on me the little sins of the race. It's an easy job enough, what I did, but there's few have the stomach for it. Not that you need call it dirty work neither! Just stand by and leave 'em alone—to girn and bleat and squinny and die."

"No blood, eh?" the man in the corner said suddenly. "I like blood."

"What a fine night it has turned!" said the man in the grey frock coat, raising the window and putting his head out of it. . . . "Something rather uncanny, eh,

about that man?" he remarked half to himself, half to his friend in corduroys.

"Take your head in," said the latter, almost affectionately, "or you'll be catching cold, and you've a nasty scar on your neck that I could see as you leaned forward, and which you oughtn't to go getting the cold into."

"Oh, that!" said the other with complacence, sitting down again, but averting his gaze carefully from the man in the corner, for whom he seemed to feel a repulsion as marked as was his preference for his cheerful *vis-à-vis*. "That! That's actually the scar of the blow that killed me. A fearful gash! He was a powerful man that dealt it. He got me, of course, from behind. I never even saw him. I was drafted off here *at once*, his hand had been so sure." He felt nervously in his pockets. "I have a foulard somewhere, but I am apt to mislay it. . . ."

"You should do like me, have a good strong handkercher and knot it round your neck firm. I've got a mark of sorts on my neck too, but it isn't an open wound—never was," the bluff man sniggered. "It is sheer vanity with me, but I don't care to have it seen. It goes well all round, mine does—done by a rope, eh!"

He paused and nodded slyly. "For killing a toff. Nice old gentleman he seemed, too, but I hadn't much time to look at him. Had to get to work——"

He was rudely interrupted by a cry of pleasure from the baby farmer.

"Lord!" she cried, "do I see another conveyance coming on this lonely road? I do 'ope so. I'm one for seeing plenty of people. I always like a crowd, and I must tell you, this sort of humdrum jogging along was beginning to get on my nerves."

They all, except the man in the corner, jerked themselves round, and peered through the glass panes behind them.

A dark object, plainly outlined in the clear moonlight which now lit up the heavens, where heavy masses of cloud had until now obscured its effulgence, was plainly visible. It blotted the ribbon of white that lay in front of them. . . . Nearer and nearer it came. All heads were craned at the windows of the coach. . . . Now it was seen to be a high-hung dog-cart, of the most modern pattern, drawn by a little mettled pony, and containing two slight young girls. . . . The one that drove held the ribbons in hands that were covered with white doe-skin gloves, and which looked immense in the pallid moonshine. . . .

"What an excitement!" said the stout woman. "We shall pass them. Some member of one of the country families about here, I suppose."

"I hope—for all things considering, I'm not a blood-thirsty man"—the man in corduroys murmured, "that we're not a-going to give them a shock! Bound to, when we meet them plumb like this! 'Orses mostly can't abide the sight of the likes of us, no more than they could those nasty motors when they first came in. And we're worse than motors—they seem to smell us out at once for what we are!"

"If you do really think that pony is likely to swerve," said the man in the grey suit, anxiously, "would it be of any use our asking old Diggory to drive more slowly and humour them?"

"Couldn't go no slower than we are!" replied the man in corduroys. "Besides, it's not the pace that kills! I'll bet you that pony's all of a sweat already!"

The dog-cart approached. The faces of the two young women were discernible—white—blanched with fear. It may have been the effect of the strong moonlight, but there was no doubt that they were disturbed, and that the

girl who was driving fully realised the necessity of controlling the pony, whose nostrils were quivering, and on whose sides foam appeared in white swathes. . . .

"It won't pass us!" said the man in the corner, speaking suddenly. He rubbed his hands slowly one over the other. "There will be blood!"

"For goodness' sake stop gloating like that!" said the stout woman. "It turns my stomach to hear you. Wherever can you have come from, I wonder? 'Tisn't manners . . . I say, can't we hail them?" she inquired of the man in grey. "All at once give one big shout!"

"They wouldn't be able to hear us," he replied, shaking his head sadly. "You must not forget that we are ghosts. We are not really here."

"Ay, and that's what the beasts know!" cried the man in corduroys. He jumped about on his seat. "The 'oss won't be able to stand it. That kid'll not be able to hold him in. . . ."

"They're on us!" screamed the smart woman. "Oh, my God! Do we have to sit still and see it?" She covered her eyes with her hands.

"Yes, Missus, I reckon you have, and what's more, run away after like any shoffer that's killed his man and left him lying in the roadside. Old Diggory's got his orders."

The snorting of the pony was now audible. The coachful of ghosts distinctly saw the lather of foam dropping from its jaws. They were able, some of them, to realise the agonised tension of one girl's hands, pulling for all she was worth, and the scared sideways twist of her forcedly inactive companion. Alone the disc of the yellow carriage-lamp glared, immovable. . . .

Then it flew down, and was extinguished. There was a crash—a convulsion—and the great road to the north lay clear again.

The Coach of Death rolled on remorselessly past a black heap that filled the ditch on one side. It lay quite still, after that first almost human leap and heave. . . .

The smart woman fainted, or appeared to do so. The baby farmer sat quivering in her fat.

"But it's iniquitous!" exclaimed the man in grey, turning round from the window, his eyes wet—"to leave them behind like that—without a word of inquiry, when it's our conveyance has done all the mischief!"

His friend in corduroys tried to soothe him. "We ain't to blame, sir, don't you think it!" he repeated. "As you said to the lady, we aren't really here!"

"That is small consolation to a man of honour," the old man said sadly. "Still, as you say, we are but tools——"

He devoted himself to the smart woman, who revived a little under his civil ministrations.

"After all," she said, "aren't we somehow or other all in the same boat? I shouldn't be surprised if those two nice girls didn't join us at the next stage? If they do, we'll make them tell us how they felt when they first saw the coachful of ghosts coming down on them. They're certainly dead, for they were both pitched into the ditch with the cart and horse on top of them. Did anybody see what became of the horse? No. . . . Well, we must settle down to dullness again, I am afraid, or, suppose, to while away the time we all started to tell each other the story of how we came to be here? A lively tale might cheer us all up, after the accident."

"Agreed, Madam, heartily for my part," said the man in grey, "though my own story is very humdrum, and not in the least amusing. You want, of course, an account of the particular accident that sent me here. Very well! But, ladies first! Will you not begin, Madam?"

She tossed her head with an affected air.

"My story, perhaps," she insinuated with modesty, "might not be very new to you. It was in all the papers so recently."

"That will not affect me," he answered, "for if, as I presume, it was a murder case, I never read them."

"I read yours then, Missus, I expect," said the man in corduroys. "I generally get the wife to read them out to me—anything spicy."

"And yet the people that did it are not hanged yet, if, indeed, they ever are, poor souls! I am quite anxious," said the smart woman, "to see how it goes. If the pair are really sent here, I suppose I shall be running up against them some night or other on one of these transference parties. It will be very interesting. But"—she leaned across to the baby farmer—"could we not persuade you to give us some of your—nursery experiences, Madam?"

"There's not much story about the drowning of a litter of squalling puppies or whining kittens," said that lady shortly, "we want something livelier—more personal, if I may say so. From a remark that gentleman in the corner let drop a little while ago, I fancy his reminiscences would be quite worth hearing, as good as a shilling shocker."

"My story," replied the individual thus pointedly addressed, "is impossible, frankly impossible."

"Indecent, do you mean?" The smart woman's eyes shone. "Oh, let us have it. You can veil it, can't you?"

"Have you ever heard of mental degenerates?" he asked her compassionately. "I was one. I was called mad—a simple way of expressing it. I was a chemist. I dissected neatly enough, too, like a regular butcher. They did quite right to destroy me."

His head dropped, and he seemed disinclined to say more, but the smart woman persisted:

"But the details——?"

"Are purely medical, Ma'am. Not without a pathological interest, I may say. Interesting at least to men of science. The"—he named a daily paper much in vogue at that time—"made a good deal of the strong sense of artistry—of contrast—the morbid warp inherent in the executant——"

His head sank again on his chest.

"I do believe," said the baby farmer, nudging the smart woman, "that we shall find he's the man who killed his sweetheart and then carefully tied her poor inside all into true lover's knots with sky-blue ribbon. Artist, indeed! They're common enough colours—blue and red——"

"Disgusting!" The delicate lady from Monte Carlo shuddered, and turning coldly away, joined in the petition proffered by the other ghosts to the breezy man in corduroys to relate his experiences.

"Oh, I'll tell you how I came to join you and welcome!" he said, rolling his huge neck about in its setting of red cotton. "Well, to begin with, I was drunk. Equally, of course, I was hard up. My missus—she's married again, by the way, blast her!—was always nagging me to do something for her and the kids. I did. Nation's taking care of them now, along of what I did. Work, she meant, but that was only by the way. I did choose to take on a job, though, on a rich man's estate, building some kind of Folly, lots of glass and that, working away day and night by naphtha flares, you know. He was one of those men, you know the sort, that has more money than a man can properly spend, and feels quite sick about it, and says so, in interviews and so on, in the

papers a working man reads. That's the mischief. He was always giving away chunks of money to charities and libraries and that sort of useless lumber, but none of it ever seemed to come the way of those that were in real need of it. They said the money had got on his nerves, and would not let him sleep o' nights, and that he was afraid by day and went about with a loaded stick and I don't know what all. And he was looked after by detectives, at one time, so the papers said—again the papers, putting things in people's heads, as it's their way! So one blessed evening I was very low—funds and all, and my missus and the kids hollering and complaining as they always do when luck's bad. Lord bless them, they never thought as they were 'citing their man to murder. Women never do think. And going out with their snivelling in my ears, I passed the station where he landed every evening after his day in town, and I happened to see him come out of the train and send away his motor that was awaiting for him all regular, and start out to walk 'ome alone by a short cut across a little plantation there was, very thick and dark, just the place for a murder. Well—I told you I was half drunk—I raced home and got something to do it with—our meat chopper——”

The old man opposite put his hand nervously to the back of his neck.

“Ay, Mister, it takes you just there, does it? You look a regular bundle of nerves, you do. Well, as I was saying, I went round by a short cut that I happened to know of, and got in front of him and hid in the hedge. Ten mortal minutes I waited for my man to come by. Lord, how my hand did tremble! I'd have knocked off for twopence. I was nervous as a cat, but all the same it didn't prevent me from striking out for wife and children with a will when my chance came. I caught him behind

with my chopper, and he fell like a log. Never lifted a hand to defend himself—hadn't got any gumph. Ladies dear, I don't suppose I hurt him much, for he never even cried out when I struck or groaned when it was done. Then I looked him over, turned out his pockets and collared his watch and season ticket and seals and money. Money—hah!—I had been fairly done over that. Would you believe it of a rich fellow like him, he hadn't got more than the change of a sovereign on him?"

"Shame!" ejaculated the taciturn man in the corner.

"I admit it was hard on you," the man in grey observed kindly. "Very hard, for I believe the retribution came all too quickly. You foolishly left your family chopper about to identify you, and were apprehended at once by our excellent rural police. Yet the law is so dilatory that you lay in gaol a whole year before you were free to join your victim here?"

"Right you are, mate. Yes, I swung for it, sure enough. Short and sweet it was once I stood on the drop, but it still makes my poor old throat ache to think of it. . . ."

He wriggled and twisted his neck in its ruddy cincture. . . .

"Now, governor, I'm done, and if you've no objection we'd all like to hear how you came by that ugly gash of yours? It wasn't no rope did that. Common or garden murder, I'll be bound."

"Certainly, my man, it was a murder—a murder most *apropos*. The circumstances were peculiar. I have often longed to get the ear of the jury who tried a man for relieving me of my light purse and intolerably heavy life, and tell them—the whole hard-working, conscientious twelve of them, trying their best to avenge my wrongs—my own proper feelings, surely no negligible factor in the

case! They could not guess, these ignorant living men, whose eyes had not yet been opened by death to a due sense of the proportions of things—that I bore the poor creature no malice, but instead was actually grateful for his skilful surgery that had severed the life-cord that wearied me, so neatly and completely.”

“It isn’t everyone would take it like that!” remarked the smart woman. “Yet that is, more or less, how I feel about these things myself. Only in my case it is impossible to speak of skilful surgery! I was so disgracefully cut up, I couldn’t possibly have worn a low dress again!”

“Have you ever heard,” said the man in grey thoughtfully, “of the Greek story of the Gold of Rhampsinitos, and the cellar he built to store it in? According to the modern system, *my* gold was hoarded in my brain, where fat assets and sordid securities bred and bred all day long. The laws that govern wealth are hard. You must give it, devise it, you must not allow it to be taken. But for my part I would have welcomed the two sons of the master builder who broke into the Greek King’s Treasure House. In the strong-room of my brain it lodged. With one careless calculation, one stroke of a pen, I could make money breed money there to madden me. I was lonely, too. I had no wife to divide my responsibilities. I dared approach no woman in the way of love—I did not choose to be loved for my cheque-signing powers. I was not loved at all. I was hated. Unrighteous things were done in my name, by the greedy husbandmen of my load of money. Then I was told that I went in danger of my life, and I condescended to take care of that—for a time—only for a time!

“One dark winter evening—I forget what had happened during the day, what fresh instance of turpitude or greed

had come before me—I was so revolted that I kicked away all the puling safeguards by which my agents guarded their best asset of all, and gave the rein to my instinct. I disregarded precautions of every sort—with the exception of my faithful loaded stick, and the carrying of that had come to be a mere matter of habit with me—and I walked home from the station alone, up to my big house and good dinner which I hoped—nay, I almost knew—that I should not be alive to eat. And indeed, as luck would have it, on that night of all nights the trap was set for me, the death-dealer was waiting—he took me on at once. I got my desire—kind, speedy, merciful, violent Death. I never even saw the face of my deliverer.”

“By George!” softly swore the man in corduroys. “This beats all. Are you sure you aren’t kidding us?”

“No indeed, that is exactly how I felt about it, and if I had known of knowledge, as I knew of instinct, what was going to happen I would have thought to realise some of my wealth before setting out to walk through that wood, and made it more worth the honest fellow’s while. But as you are aware, a millionaire does not carry portable gold about with him, and my cheque-book which I had on me would, of course, be of no use to him. Alas, all the poor devil got for his pains was exactly nineteen shillings and eleven pence. I had changed a sovereign at the bookstall to buy a paper, and out of habit, had waited for the change.”

The man in corduroys had rent the red handkerchief fiercely from his neck, and now made as if to tear it across his knee.

“Why, governor,” he exclaimed passionately, “do you mean to say it was through you that I got this here”—he put both hands behind his head and interlocked them—“in return for giving you that there cut at the back of

your neck? Well, how things do come about, to be sure!"

"Gently, my man!" the elder soothed him. "Don't be so melodramatic about a very ordinary coincidence. See, the ladies are quite upset. It doesn't do to allow oneself to get excited here—it's not in the rules. If I had made the little discovery you have done, I don't think—no, I really don't think I would have made it public. This undue exhibition of emotion of yours strikes me as belonging to the vulgar world we have all left. But since you have allowed it to come out, and everyone is now aware of the peculiar relation in which we stand to each other, you must let me tender you my best thanks, as to a most skilful and firm operator, and believe me to be truly grateful to you for your services in the past."

"Quite the old school!" said the smart woman.

"I must say, sir, I consider you the real gentleman," said the baby farmer.

"I *am* a gentleman."

"And a fairly accommodating one!" said the rough man, wiping his brow where, however, no sweat was. "It isn't every man as would give thanks for being scragged!"

"Every man isn't a millionaire," said his victim calmly.

The smart woman, leaning forward, tapped the old gentleman amiably with her jewelled pince-nez.

"We belong to the same world, I perceive," she said, "and I am quite able to understand your refined feeling. It is as I said in my own case. Indeed if those two good people, who shall be nameless, had only dealt with me a little more gently, I don't know that I should not forgive them absolutely. I shall at any rate be perfectly civil when I do meet them—only perhaps a *little* distant. But

that Monte Carlo existence I was leading when they interrupted it, was really becoming intolerable! Glare, noise, glitter, fever—that heartless, blue, laughing sea they talk of in the railway advertisements——”

The baby farmer, left out in this elegant discussion, obviously took no pleasure in it, but staring straight before her, muttered sulkily :

“Cote d’Azur and Pentonville! There’s some little difference, isn’t there, between one life and the other? Yet I enjoyed my life I did, and as for gratitude, I can’t say as I see all those blessed infants a-coming up to me, and slobbering me for what I did for ’em. I may meet them one of these days, but they’ll not notice me. ’Tisn’t in human nature. Their mothers thanked me beforehand, in cash, for what I was a-going to do. Lord, what’s a rickety baby more or less? I say, we’re slowing up! Going to stop perhaps, and a good thing too!”

“Yes,” continued the man in the grey frock coat, “I cordially thank the man who rid me with one clean blow of my wretched life. A skilled workman is worthy of his hire.”

“Mercy,” muttered the baby farmer. “Is he never going to stop? If it was for nothing else he ought to have got scragged for being a bore!”

But being fully wound up, though in the excitement of arriving at the depot no one was attending, the man in grey continued, “Suicide I had thought of, but abhorred, though on my soul I had nearly come to that, and then it was merely a question of courage—you spoke truly, sir. Mine was a thin, pusillanimous nature, as you said. You came by, a kind Samaritan, and sacrificed your own good life freely to rid me of my wretched one. I think I told you that when you were being tried, I followed urgently all the details of the trial, and made interest with

the authorities here to allow me to appear to the judge—or the foreman of the jury—in their sleep, say—and instil some inkling of the true state of my feeling towards you. I do not know, however, if you would have thanked me, for life may have been no sweeter to you than it was to me—you spoke of an uncongenial helpmate, I think? Still one never knows. I might have been the means of procuring you some good years yet in the full exercise of your vigour and remarkable decision of character. But it was not to be. You followed me here after an interval, and now we have met, face to face. The introduction on that dark night was worth nothing. I like your face. We shall probably never meet again—I, or you, may be on a different round next year, so I am the more glad of this opportunity of opening my mind to you on a delicate subject, perhaps, but one that has always been very near my heart. By the way”—he lifted his stick with its shining ivory crown—“did you notice this? You read the papers, you said, and they told you it was heavily weighted and that I carried it always as a precaution. Well, on that night perhaps you were too hurried to notice?—I never used it. Accept it now, will you, as a memento? . . . I think, from these truly unearthly bumpings, that we have come to our journey’s end? Yes, I am right, the coachman has got down from his perch and taken his head under his arm. . . . We part. Mesdames, I salute you. Again, sir”—he addressed himself very particularly to the shamefaced man in corduroys—“farewell. Very pleased to have met you!”

The coach had drawn up in the semblance of an inn yard, and one by one the passengers faded away into the distance. The old man was the last to get out carefully, when a pale, proud woman’s face, shining up from where she stood by the step, fixed his weary eyes. She was an

intending passenger, and she was alone. She wore white doe-skin gloves, but no hat. Unusual, he fancied, in a woman of her class. On looking closer, he saw that she had a hat, but that it hung over her shoulder by an elastic, and was much battered and destroyed. He decided to speak to her :

"You are the lady we killed, I think?" he asked gently.

She acknowledged with a bow that it was so.

"We could none of us do anything," he apologised, "or—I hope you will believe——"

"Certainly, sir, it was no fault of yours, or indeed of the company's, I am sure. The accident was inevitable!" so she assured him, smiling faintly. He looked at her kindly. There was blood on her hair; his eyes were good, he was able to convince himself. . . . "But Rory—our pony—never can pass things, at the best of times, and the look of your conveyance was certainly rather unusual. And at that time of night we rarely meet anything on the Great North Road. We chose that time on purpose, my sister and I—we had been staying away for a week with friends, and we were going home. When we saw you coming, Lucy said, half in jest—she is older than I—'Suppose that thing in front were the Coach of Death the foolish country people talk about? They say it travels this way once a year, with its cargo of souls, on St. John's Eve.' I bade her not be superstitious, but I confess I thought the vehicle looked odd myself, and I did wonder how Rory would stand it. When it came near I saw distinctly that the coachman was headless, and I laughingly told my sister so. She bade me not disturb her, for death coach or live coach, she meant to do her best to get Rory past it. She failed——"

The man in grey looked nervously around. He was along with the young lady in the dull inn yard. The

headless coachman was preparing to ascend to the box seat again. . . .

"Where is your sister now?" he inquired.

"She lies at the bottom of the ditch. Rory has galloped home. She fell on her head, but she is still alive. When they find her in the morning, she will be dead, I know that. For now I know all things. I am at peace. You need have no care for me. . . ."

"Let me at least put you into the coach," he begged.

"And you will prefer the corner seat?" . . .

She took it; he went on:

"It looks, however, as if you were going to have all the accommodation to yourself, for this stage at all events."

He raised his hat; she bowed.

"I am grieved that I cannot have the pleasure—that I cannot offer to accompany you, but I have my marching orders. . . ."

He raised his hat again. . . The coach moved on out of the yard. Soon it was lost in the mists. . . . The summer dawn was just breaking.

Invergordon, September, 1906.

F. TENNYSON JESSE

THE MAN WITH TWO MOUTHS

ON a grey day a girl was walking along a crescent of sand that curved at the cliff's base. As she went the water welled up in the slanting hollows left by her feet, and the fat, evil-looking leaves of the cliff plants glistened with spray moisture; even the swollen fingers of the marsh samphire, that all seemed to point at the girl as she passed each bore a tremulous drop at the tip. At the end of the little beach the girl paused, and then turned to look out to sea, balancing herself on a slab of wet shiny granite where the cone-shaped shellfish clustered and from which the long green weed floated out and in on the heave of the tide. The girl held back the red hair that whipped about her forehead and stared from under an arched palm.

"'Tes naught but a plaguey dolphin, d'believe," she muttered, yet still stayed for one more glimpse of the dark thing that was bobbing up through the curdling foam-pattern. A stinging scatter of spray blew into her eyes blinding her, and when she looked again the dark thing had come nearer, and she saw it to be the body of a man caught in the ratlines of some shrouds that the sea's action had lapped around a drifting mast. Were it not that his chin was hitched over the ratlines, so that he was borne along with his face—a pale blot among the paler blots of the foam—upturned, he would doubtless have



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From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

sunk, for he was not lashed to the mast in any way. A huge foam patch had formed in the web made by the tangled shrouds, so that his head and shoulders showed clearly against the creaming halo, on which his long hair, dark with wet and released from its queue, lay streaked away from his tilted face. The girl called to him twice in her strong, rough voice; then, since even if he still lived he was past any consciousness of doing so, she kept her energies for the saving of him. Wading in as deep as she dared—not more than up to her hips, for even then the heave and suction of the water threatened to knock her off her feet—she clung on to a ridge of rock with one hand, and, leaning forward, made snatches at the spar whenever it surged towards her. To her dismay she saw that with every heave his legs must be catching against some rocks, for his head began to sink away from the supporting ratlines, and when at last she caught one end of the spar she only succeeded in drawing it away from him. His head disappeared; for a moment the dark hole in the midst of the foam-circle held, then broke, and was overrun as the whiteness closed upon it. The next minute a surge of undercurrent brought him knocking against her legs; she just managed to hold on with one hand while with the other she plunged down at him. Her fingers met the cold sleekness of his face, then caught in his tangled hair, and, drawing herself up backwards against the rock-ledges, she pulled him with her, step by step. A few minutes more and she had staggered up the narrow strip of beach with her burden dragging from her arms. Tumbling him along the drier sand at the cliff's foot, she knelt beside him, and with hands trembling from the strain that had been put upon the muscles, she pulled apart the clinging shirt that was so sodden it seemed to peel from off him. She felt at his heart, then laid her ear to the

pale glistening chest where the dark hair was matted to a point between the breasts; she beat that pale chest with her hand, and at last saw the faint red respond to the blows of her fingers. On that much of hope she desisted, seemed to hesitate, then half-hauling him up by a hand beneath each shoulder, she began dragging him towards where the cliff curved outwards again to the sea. At a point some three or four feet from the ground the cliff overhung so that it was possible to imagine creeping beneath it at low tide, though a curtain of glossy spleen-wort hung down so thickly it was difficult to tell. Going upon her knees, the girl crawled backwards under the dripping dark green fringe, and pulled the man in after her. Within, a tunnel, in which it was soon possible to walk upright, led at a gradual incline up to what was apparently the heart of the cliff, that here was honeycombed into those smugglers' caves of the West of which even now all the secrets are not known. Up this incline she got herself and him, and at last dragged him triumphantly into the big cave where she and her father, Bendigo Keast, stored the smuggled goods in which they traded so successfully. It was very dark, but with accustomed hands she felt for the small iron box in which the flint and tinder were kept; soon a tiny flame sprang to life, and she passed it on to a wick that floated limply in a little cup of stinking fish-oil on the floor. In the mere breath of light thus given the rows of stacked barrels loomed dimly, the outermost curve of each gleaming faintly, while between them the shadow lay banded.

Thomasin Keast ran some brandy from a little keg near into her palm and tilted it between the man's teeth, then slopped the raw spirit over his shirt, drenching it again. Then—not stripping him, for the modesty of a Cornish woman, who thinks shame to show even her feet, pre-

vented that—she filled her hands with brandy and ran them in under his clothes, rubbing tirelessly up and down till the flesh began to dry and tingle. Around his reddened neck, where the soft young beard merged into wet curls, she rubbed; over his shoulders, where the big pectoral muscles came swelling past his armpits like a cape, then down the serried ribs that she could knead the supple flesh around, past the curve-in of the whole body beneath them, to the gracious slimness of the flanks and the nervous indentation of the groins between the trunk and the springing arches of the thighs. So Thomasin knelt in the gloom of the cave, and all the time that his life was coming painfully and reluctantly back to him under her strong, glowing hands, she felt as though some presage of new life were flowing into herself. The old saw has it that the saving of a drowning man brings ill-luck to his rescuer; but Thomasin, as she watched grow in his features that intangible something which makes the face human instead of a mere mask, scorned the superstition; and still more she scorned it as her urgent hands felt the rising beat of his pulses and arteries. For during that time his hidden form became so known to her that his every curve and muscle, the very feel of the strong-growing hair upon him softening into down as his skin dried, all impressed themselves clearly on her memory for ever, and she felt him hers—hers by right of discovery as well as right of salvage.

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Thomasin Keast and her father lived in a little four-square cottage set about half a mile from the headland—a half-mile of thorn and bracken, of tumbled boulders and wedges of furze almost as solid. Here in the spring the yellow-hammer and the linnet, the stonechat and the

whinchat, shrilled their first notes, and at dawn the grey-bird thrust a thirsty beak into the dewy blackthorn blossoms; here the dun-colored rabbits darted in and out of their burrows with a gleam of white scuts. Here, too, Keast and his daughter herded the moorland ponies that, well-soaped, were loaded with the barrels of spirit and packets of lace which had been brought from France at dark of the moon. The cottage was of rough grey granite, with a roof crusted with yellow stonecrop that looked as though it had been spilled molten over the slates. On either sides of the door a great wind-buttress, reaching to the eaves, swept out like a sheltering wing.

This was the place to which Thomasin Keast brought her man on that stormy evening. Dusk was already making the air deeply, softly blue, and through it the whitewashed lintel gleamed out almost as clearly as the phosphorescent fish nailed against the wall. Half-leading, half-supporting him, Thomasin steered the stranger between the buttresses and through the narrow doorway into the living-room. A peat fire glowed on the hearth and against it the figure of a crouching man showed dark. At the noise in the doorway he thrust an armful of furze on to the fire, and the quick crackling flare that followed threw a reflection like the flashing of summer lightning over the whitewashed walls; sending the shadows scurrying into the corners and revealing the man whose big hand, ridged with raised veins that ran up to the wrist, was still upon the furze-stem.

Bendigo Keast was not long past his prime of strength and could still have out-wrestled many a younger man. Through his jersey the working of his enormous shoulders showed as plainly as those of a cat beneath her close fur, and under his chin the reddish beard could not hide the knots of his powerful throat. His eyes, blue and

extraordinarily alert, were half-hidden by the purpled lids, and the massive folds of his cheeks that came down in a furrow on either side of his slightly incurved mouth, looked hard as iron. Like most seamen when within doors, he was in his stockings, and as he rose and his bulk swayed forward his feet broadened a little and gripped at the uneven flagstones like those of a great ape.

Thomasin spoke first.

"'Tes a man I found drownen', da," she said, and in her voice uneasiness mingled with a readiness for defiance. "He'm most dead wi' salt water, and cold. Us must get en to the bed to wance. Da . . ."

"Where did ee find em?" asked Bendigo Keast, without moving.

"To cove."

"Did a see aught?"

"How should a, and him nigh drowned?" evaded Thomasin; then, as the stranger sank on to the settle and let his wet brown head fall limply back against it, she went over to a crock of milk that stood in the window-sill and poured some into a saucepan.

"Get en to the bed, da," she said more sharply. "I'll see to your supper. He must have nawthen but milk for the night."

Bendigo came forward, and, swinging his long arms round the man, carried him off up the stairs that led from the living-room into the first of the two tiny bedrooms. He soon came down again.

"Tell me how tes a smells of brandy?" he demanded.

"I rubbed en down wi' et to put life into en." Thomasin spoke quietly, but the sound of her stirring spoon grew less rhythmical.

"Then a did see?"

"Da, listen to me," said Thomasin, turning round,

"S'pose a did see, what then? He'n naught but a foreigner from up-country, and wouldn't know to give we away. And—s'posen he'm minded to stay by us—well, you d'know we'm needing another hand. We must find one somewhere, and there's none o' the chaps to the church-town would come in wi' us, because us have allus stood by oursel' and made our own profits. But now Dan's dead, you d'knaw as well's I us must get another hand to help in the *Merrymaid*. If you weren't so strong and I as good as a man, it would ha' needed four of us to ha' run her."

"How can us knaw whether to trust en?" asked Bendigo suspiciously. "'Tes bad luck to save a man from the sea, they do say."

"Don't decide nawthen tell you've talked wi'en," advised Thomasin. "May be the poor chap was too mazed to take notice o' what he saw. Us'll knaw to-morrow."

And next day the rescued man was sitting by the hearth, somewhat stiff from bruises, but otherwise with his wiry frame none the worse. His looks had strikingly improved, for now that the soft beard, which had never known a razor, was dry, it peaked forward a little, whereas when wet it had clung to his too narrow jaw and revealed a lax line of chin.

His story was soon told—the brig on which he was mate had been returning from France when a squall overtook her, and she became a total wreck. He had clung to the floating spar for several hours before losing consciousness, when the tangled ratlines had borne him up and the tide had swept him into the shoreward current which set round the headland.

"And the first thing I knew," he ended, "was your face, mistress, bending over me in your cave. . . ."

Keast shot a glance at his daughter. They had ex-

changed looks before, at the man's mention of France, and now Bendigo flung a few veiled phrases, with here and there a cant term common to smugglers, at his guest, who understood him perfectly, and himself became entirely frank. His name, he said, was Robin Start, and that there was mixed blood in him he admitted. A more gracious race showed itself in his quick turns of wrist and eye, his ease of phrase, in his ready gallantry towards Thomasin. Yes, said Robin Start, his mother was a Frenchwoman, and had taught him her tongue—a fact he found useful in his dealings on the other side of the Channel.

A bargain is an intricate and subtle thing in Cornwall, a thing of innuendoes and reservations, and the one Bendigo Keast struck with the stranger was not without subtleties on both sides. Robin Start had quite understood all he had seen in the cave and had made a mental note of the way out, which gave him a hold over Bendigo. On the other hand, Robin, who suffered paroxysms of craving for safety in the intervals of delighting in danger, knew it was safer to come in with Bendigo and make something for himself smuggling than it would be for him to think of escaping from that muscular father and daughter if he declined. As for Keast, it was true that since his nephew Dan had been knocked on the head by a swing of the boom, he needed some one to take the lad's place. A bottle of smuggled rum sealed the bargain, and then, for the first time in her life, Thomasin was talked to as a woman. To her father a partner; a mere fellowman to the dark, silent Daniel who now lay in the lap of the tides; shunned by the envious villagers, and looked at askance by the Government men, Thomasin had never known of the sphere which began to be revealed to her that evening. For one thing, she was plain, though

in certain lights or effects of wind she looked fine enough in a high-boned, rock-hewn way. She was what is called in that part of the world a "red-headed Dane," and her broad, strongly modelled face was thickly powdered with freckles. Though she was only twenty-two, hundreds of nights of exposure to wind and wet had roughened her skin, but at the opening of her bodice, where a hint of collar-bones showed like a bar beneath the firm flesh, her skin was privet-white. The slim, brown-haired Robin with his quick eyes was a contrast in looks and manners to anyone she had ever met, and mingled with her awe and wonder of him was the fierce sense of possession that had entered into her when she passed her hands over and over him in the cave. Also she felt maternal towards him because, though he must have been nigh upon thirty, he was one of those men who have a quality of appeal.

It was a stormy autumn that year, and little was possible in the way of business; but for Thomasin, who up till now had lived so whole-heartedly for her partnership with her father, it became that time of which at least the mirage appears to every one once in life. For her happiness she and Robin repainted her other love, the *Merrymaid*, together; giving her a new black coat and a white ribbon, and changing the green of her upright stem to blue. The *Merrymaid* was constantly adopting little disguises of the sort, running sometimes under barked sails, sometimes under white, and alternating between a jib and a gaff-topsail with a square head. Then in the long winter evenings the Keasts and Robin would sit by the fire, Bendigo pulling at his clay pipe, and Thomasin knitting a perpetual grey stocking—surely as innocent and law-abiding an interior as could have been found!—while Robin told them tales of all he had seen and done. Bendigo now and then gave a grunt that might have been of

dissent, interest, or merely of incipient sleep, but Thomasin sat enthralled by the soft tones that to her mind could have lured a bird from the egg. Robin told of the thick yellow sea towards the north of China, so distinct from the blue sea around that it looked more like a vast shoal of sand, stretching for mile upon mile. He told, too, of the reddish dust, fine as mist, which once fell for days over his ship when he was far out at sea; it fell until the decks seemed like a dry soft beach, and lungs and eyes and at last their very souls seemed filled with it. His captain said it was blown along the upper air all the way from the Mongolian plains but he himself thought it came from Japan, that country of volcanoes. Thomasin's ideas of volcanoes were derived from a broadsheet she had once seen which represented Vesuvius apparently on fire from the base, but she felt sure the mysterious sand was of the devil, and must come from somewhere hot.

So Robin talked and Thomasin listened, and with the coming of spring new portents woke in her blood and stirred the air. Robin began to slip his hand up her arm when he stood beside her in the shadow of the wind-buttresses, and when they went down to the caves he would make opportunities to press against her in the passages. The sheer animal magnetism of the girl allured him, and he found her crude and hitherto fierce aloofness going to his head. Though frequently now he felt a sudden passion of distaste for the physical strength of this father and daughter sweep over him, yet would come another passion, waked by the wonder of it that still lay in Thomasin's eyes—and he would think of what a pleasure was at his hand in Thomasin's potentialities for passion and the freshness of her. . . .

She herself was reluctant yet, for all her hot blood and untrained nature, partly because of the ingrained suspicion

of soft things her upbringing had engendered, partly because of the eternal instinct which prompts withdrawal for the purpose of luring on. But in her heart she knew—she knew when the spring was on the cliffs, and he and she lay on the thymy grass watching for the fish-shoals; when around Robin's turf-pillowed head the rose-specked, flesh-hued cups of the sea-milkwort stood up brimming with the jewelled air as with a divine nectar; when among the cushions of silvery lichen and grey-green moss the scented gorse flung a riot of yellow, and the mating birds answered each other on a note like secret laughter. Then Thomasin would sometimes close her eyes for the happiness she dared not yet acknowledge; yet those days of soft joy and beauty were as nothing to the night of hard work and danger that finally brought her surging blood to acknowledge him as lord—that night when all the dominant male in him was of necessity stung to the surface by danger.

They were running a cargo of thirty barrels over from France—he, she, and her father. The *Merrymaid*, which was sloop-rigged and of about twenty tons burden, was quite enough for the three to handle, laden as she was with the corded tubs slung together with the stones already attached; for it was proposed to sink the cargo and then run on to harbour openly, a thing frequently done when the Preventive men were known to be on the watch. Robin was suffering from one of his nerve-revulsions; he dared show no sign of it, but as he sat in the bows, keeping a look-out through the darkness, he told himself that if this trip were brought off in safety it would be the last as far as he was concerned. He could stand the portentous figure of Bendigo looming at him through the little cottage no more, and he knew what to do. . . . As for Thomasin, he would not lose her—a woman surely sticks

by her man. And if not, she would never harm him; and there were other women in the world—for the appeal Thomasin had for him was of sex, and not of personality.

Thomasin sat with her arm along the tiller, keeping the *Merrymaid* on a nor'-nor'-west course so as to make the Lizard light. They were running under their foresail and close-reefed mainsail only, for the south-west wind for which they had waited was swelling to storm-fury. The *Merrymaid* lay right over, the water scolding past her dipping gunwale and the clots of spindrift that whirled over the side gleaming like snowflakes in the darkness, which was of that intense quality which becomes vibrant to long staring. Robin, straining his eyes, was only aware of the danger when they were almost on it, but his voice shrieked out on the instant to Thomasin: "Hard-a-port!" and again, in a desperate hurry of sound, "Hard-a-port!"

Thomasin jambed the helm up as Bendigo, with the agility of long use to sudden danger, eased off the sheets; and then Thomasin could see what menaced them. A Preventive boat, like themselves with no light save the wretched glimmer over the compass, had been lying to under her mizzen, and already her men were making sail. Thomasin sat gripping the tiller while the voices of her menfolk came to her ears.

"The topsail!" shouted Robin; but Bendigo's voice made answer. "Not till us has to—it might rip mast off in this gale. Try the jib. . . ."

They set the jib and shook out the reefs in the mainsail, and the *Merrymaid* answered to it like a racehorse to the whip. She quivered all her length, the tiller pushed like a sentient thing against Thomasin's palm and they went reeling on.

For nearly an hour they ran before the wind, helped by

the flood-tide, and all the time the Preventive boat was slowly gaining on them, for she was carrying a larger stretch of canvas. She was nearly upon them when the sound of breaking surf told that they were nearing the Manacles, and the tide was still fairly low. Suddenly Robin's voice came again, this time with a thrill in it: "Now's our chance!" he called. "We'll hoist the topsail and make a run for it inside of the Manacles."

He was at the mast as he spoke, and Thomasin heard the thin scream of the unhoiled sheave as the topsail halliards ran through it. The next moment the mast creaked and bent; the almost useless jib slackened as the other sails took all of the wind, and the *Merrymaid* shook her nose and plunged into the broken water that gleamed between the blackness of the mainland and the Manacles.

"They'll never dare follow!" cried Bendigo; and even as he did so, the Preventive boat, trusting to her superior speed to make good, began to come round to the wind so as to pass the Manacles on the outer side. The added strain proved too much, and her mast snapped with a report like a gunshot—the one clean, sharp sound through all that flurry of rushing, edgeless noise, and it told its own tale to the eager ears on the *Merrymaid*. She, under the influence of the topsail, was burying her bows at every plunge, and Thomasin knew, by the sudden cessation of the tiller's tug, that the rudder had lifted clear of the racing water, only to drive into it again with a blow that sent her reeling. Thomasin's fight with the boat she loved began in real earnest. Yawing stubbornly, the *Merrymaid* pulled against the tiller so that the rough wood seemed to burn into Thomasin's flesh, so hard had she to grip it to keep the boat's head from going up into the wind.

With the breath failing in her throat, she had none left

to cry for help; she could only wrestle with the tiller, which, all the weight of the yawing *Merrymaid* against it, seemed about to crush her.

Then hands came over hers in the darkness, and even at that moment her flesh knew Robin's.

"Tell me if I make a mistake; you know this hell-pool better than me," he called to her through the noise of the surf; and, with an easing of the muscles so exquisite as to be almost a pain in itself, she felt him absorb the weight of the boat into his grip. With the lifting of that strain from her shoulders and arms came the realisation of how mercilessly his hands were grinding hers against the tiller, yet that pain sent the first tremor of unadulterated passion through her that she had ever felt, because it was the first time he had hurt her. There was no need for her to call directions to him—he and she were so welded in one at the tiller that the unconscious pull of her arm beneath his told him, in his state of receptive tension, what to do more surely than any words. That was their true mating—not what followed after—but there in the stern of the reeling *Merrymaid*; for all that was least calculated and finest in Robin had leapt to the need of it, and their consciousness was fused as completely in the fight for life as the pain in their hands was at the tiller.

They were through—through and safe, and five minutes more saw them round the point and in the calmer water, where they slipped the cargo, and soon after they had made the harbour under easy sail, innocent of contraband from stem to stern.

All danger over, Thomasin felt oddly faint, and let her father go on ahead across the moor while she hung heavily on Robin's arm, her numbed hands slowly tingling back to life as they went. Arrived at the cottage, a faint light, that went out even as they looked, told of

Bendigo's entry, and Robin set the lantern he carried on the flagstones between the buttresses. Thomasin leant back against one of them, and the dim light, flickering upwards, softened her marked bones and brightened her eyes. Every defect of skin was hidden; it showed pale, and her mouth velvet dark upon it. Robin's lips fastened on her throat below her ear and stayed there till she stirred and gave a little cry, then his mouth moved on and up till it found hers. The kiss deepened between them; his head bent, hers upstretched. Time stayed still for one moment, during which she wanted nothing further—she was not conscious of the ground beneath her or the pain in her back-tilted neck, not even of his supporting arms or the throbbing of him against her—all her being was fused at the lips, and she felt as though hanging in space from his mouth alone.

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Robin Start waited till the cargo had been safely run and sold, and then he went across the moor to the village and made a compact with the Preventive men. The excitement of that night had had its usual way with him, and he wished never to meet danger again as long as he lived. He was suffering from a somewhat similar revulsion as regarded Thomasin, though there he knew the old allure would raise its head again for him. Bendigo's suspicious guard of him had relaxed, partly because the elder man admitted that it was Robin's nerve which had planned the dash that saved them, partly because he guessed how it was with his daughter, and thought Robin safely theirs. . . . And Robin had at last done that which had been in his mind ever since the beginning, and had sold the secret of the caves to his Majesty's Government. Nervous of being overheard in the village inn, Robin took the two

head men with him over the moor to the headland, safe in the knowledge that Bendigo was drinking heavily in the cottage—the way in which he always rewarded himself for a successful run. Robin showed the men the cunningly hidden entrances to the passages, and then for a few minutes they all three stood making their final arrangements. Robin found it wonderfully simple, the step once taken. It was agreed that the officers of the law were to surround the cottage that night after its inmates were abed, all save Robin, who was to be sitting in the kitchen ready to open the door. No harm was to be done to the girl—and, indeed, the Preventive men knew enough of Cornish juries to know that Bendigo Keast himself would get an acquittal; but his claws would be drawn, which was all they wanted. Robin, unaware of this peculiarity of a Cornish jury, would have been considerably alarmed had he known of it. Bendigo free to revenge himself had not entered into the scheme of the man from up-country, where the law was a less individual matter.

“At ten o’clock then, my man,” were the last words of the Preventive officer; but he added to his companion as they walked away: “The dirty double-mouth!” and the distaste of the official for the necessary informer was in his voice. “At ten o’clock” echoed Robin, and then was aware of a quick rustling behind him—much the noise that a big adder makes as it heaves its way through a dry tuft of grass. The sun was already setting, and the glamorous light made vision uncertain, yet Robin thought he saw a movement of the gorse more than the breeze warranted. The bush in question was one of those which concealed an opening to the caves, and Robin pulled it aside and peered into the darkness. Silence and stillness rewarded him, and he swung his legs over and descended a little way. All was quiet and empty in that passage; he turned into

another—that, too, was innocent of any presence save his. He went through up that exit, and, still uneasy, stared across the moor. If anyone—if by chance Thomasin had been in the passage, she could have slipped out that way while he was entering by the other, and be out of sight by now. . . . The sweat sprang on to Robin's brow. Then he took counsel with himself. There was no reason why Thomasin should be at the caves; nothing was doing there. It would be the most unlikely thing on earth, because neither she nor her father ever ran the unnecessary risk of going there between the cargoes. Robin knew this, and felt reassured—how, after all, could he imagine that Thomasin, sick at the reaction she felt in him, might have gone to re-gather force at the place where she had first felt him hers? . . . He thought over what he had said, and took still more heart when he remembered he had not let fall a word that showed a light holding of Thomasin; and that, he told himself, was the only thing a woman could not forgive. He felt it safe to count on passion as against the habit of a mere business partnership, which was all her relationship with her father had ever been. Dimly Robin was aware that all her spiritual life had gone into that partnership, into the feeling of her family against the world that had become an obsession with her until he had brought another interest into her life; but Robin Start would not have believed an angel from heaven who had told him that the habit of years could be stronger with a woman than a new passion. And, as regarded most women, Robin would probably have been right. Besides, it was impossible that any one could have been there, and Thomasin was his. . . . He gave himself a little shake and set off to the cottage, and such was the force of his revulsion against a life of dangers and the sinister suggestiveness of the Keasts' muscular superiority, that

he felt his heart lighter than it had been for months past. He was even pleasurable, though subconsciously, aware of the poignant beauty of the evening, and noted the rich shrilling of a thrush from the alders by the stream. It was one of those evenings, when, for a few minutes, the light holds a peculiarly rosy quality that refracts from each sharply angled surface of leaf or curved grass-blade, steeps even the shadows with wine-colour, and imparts a reddish purple to every woody shoot, from the trunks of trees to the stray twigs of thorn piercing the turf. Wine-coloured showed the stems of the alders, the lines of blackthorn hedges, the distant drifts of elms whose branches were still only faintly misted with buds. Beneath Robin's feet the yellow red-tipped blossoms of the bird's-foot trefoil borrowed of the flushed radiance till they seemed as though burning up through the ardent grass, and on the alders the catkins gleamed like still thin flakes of fire. The whole world for a few magic moments was lapped in an unharmed flame that had glow without heat, and through the gentle glory of it Robin went home.

At ten o'clock that night, with no lanterns to betray them, half a dozen Preventive men, followed by several of the leading men in the village, who had got wind of the affair and were eager to see the self-sufficient Keasts brought to book, all came up over the moor through the darkness. No light showed in the cottage as they neared it, but that was merely because the buttress, sweeping at right angles to the window, obscured it from the approach. The buttress once rounded, the men saw the light shining as Robin Start had promised. The officer motioned the others to stay quiet, and then—he was a mere lad, and eager to be the first in everything—he tiptoed to the window and peeped through.

Robin Start was sitting quietly in the armchair, a candle

burning on the stool beside him. There was nothing alarming in that, yet the next moment the boy at the window stepped back with a great cry.

"He's got two mouths!" he shrieked. "He's got two mouths!"

.

Far out on the dark Channel father and daughter were drawing away in the *Merrymaid*, the rising wind and some other urgent thing at their backs, but the sense of justice done as their solace.

And in the cottage, his wrists tightly roped to the arms of the chair and his silky beard shaved away, sat Robin Start. The footlight effect of the candle eliminated all shadow under his sloping chin, making it seem one with his throat, and that was cut from ear to ear. For the only thing on which he had not calculated was that before such treachery as his passion drops like a shot bird.

The candle flame flared up as the last of the tallow ran in a pool round the yielding wick, and for one distorted moment the edges of the slit throat flickered to the semblance of a smile. Then the flame reeled and sank, and, spark by spark, the red of the glowing wick died into the darkness.



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SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

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MRS. ADIS

IN North-East Sussex a great tongue of land runs into Kent by Scotney Castle. It is a land of woods—the old hammer woods of the Sussex iron industry—and among the woods gleam the hammer-ponds, holding in their mirrors the sunsets and sunrises. Owing to the thickness of the woods—great masses of oak and beech in a dense undergrowth of hazel and chestnut and frail willow—the road that passes Mrs. Adis's cottage is dark before the twilight has crept away from the fields beyond. That night there was no twilight and no moon, only a few pricks of fire in the black sky above the trees. But what the darkness hid the silence revealed. In the absolute stillness of the night, windless and clear with the first frost of October, every sound was distinct, intensified. The distant bark of a dog at Delmonden sounded close at hand, and the man who walked on the road could hear the echo of his own footsteps following him like a knell.

Every now and then he made an effort to go more quietly, but the roadside was a mass of brambles, and their crackling and rustling was nearly as loud as the thud of his feet on the marl. Besides, they made him go slowly, and he had no time for that.

When he came to Mrs. Adis's cottage he paused a moment. Only a small patch of grass lay between it and

the road—he went stealthily across it and looked in at the lighted, uncurtained window. He could see Mrs. Adis stooping over the fire, taking some pot or kettle off it. He hesitated and seemed to wonder. He was a big, hulking man, with reddish hair and freckled face, evidently of the labouring class, but not successful, judging by the vague grime and poverty of his appearance. For a moment he made as if he would open the window, then he changed his mind and went to the door instead.

He did not knock, but walked straight in. The woman at the fire turned quickly round.

“What, you, Peter Crouch?” she said. “I didn’t hear you knock.”

“I didn’t knock, ma’am. I didn’t want anybody to hear.”

“How’s that?”

“I’m in trouble.” His hands were shaking a little.

“What you done?”

“I shot a man, Mrs. Adis.”

“You?”

“Yes—I shot him.”

“You killed him?”

“I dunno.”

For a moment there was silence in the small, stuffy kitchen. Then the kettle boiled over and Mrs. Adis sprang for it, mechanically putting it at the side of the fire.

She was a small, frail-looking woman, with a brown, hard face on which the skin had dried in innumerable small, hair-like wrinkles. She was probably not more than forty-two, but life treats some women hard in the agricultural districts of Sussex, and Mrs. Adis’s life had been harder than most.

"What do you want me to do for you, Peter Crouch?" she said, a little sourly.

"Let me stay here a bit. Is there nowhere you can put me till they've gone?"

"Who's they?"

"The keepers."

"Oh, you've had a shine with the keepers, have you?"

"Yes; I was down by Cinder Wood seeing if I could pick up anything, and the keepers found me. There was four to one, so I used my gun. Then I ran for it. They're after me; reckon they aren't far off now."

Mrs. Adis did not speak for a moment.

Crouch looked at her searchingly, beseechingly.

"You might do it for Tom's sake," he said.

"You haven't been an over-good friend to Tom," snapped Mrs. Adis.

"But Tom's been an unaccountable good friend to me; reckon he would want you to stand by me to-night."

"Well, I won't say he wouldn't, seeing as Tom always thought better of you than you deserved. Maybe you can stay till he comes home to-night, then we can hear what he says about it."

"That'll serve my turn, I reckon. He'll be up at Iron-latch for an hour yet, and the coast will be clear by then—I can get away out of the country."

"Where'll you go?"

"I dunno. There's time to think of that."

"Well, you can think of it in here," she said, dryly, opening a door which led from the kitchen into the small lean-to of the cottage. "They'll never guess you're there, specially if I tell them I ain't seen you to-night."

"You're a good woman, Mrs. Adis. I know I'm not worth your standing by me, but maybe I'd ha' been different if I'd had a mother like Tom's."

She did not speak, but shut the door, and he was in darkness save for a small ray of light that filtered through one of the cracks. By this light he could see her moving to and fro, preparing Tom's supper. In another hour Tom would be home from Ironlatch Farm, where he worked every day. Peter Crouch trusted Tom not to revoke his mother's kindness, for they had been friends when they went together to the National School at Lamberhurst, and since then the friendship had not been broken by their very different characters and careers.

Peter Crouch huddled down upon the sacks that filled one corner of the lean-to and gave himself up to the dreary and anxious game of waiting. A delicious smell of cooking began to filter through from the kitchen, and he hoped Mrs. Adis would not deny him a share of the supper when Tom came home, for he was very hungry and he had a long way to go.

He had fallen into a kind of helpless doze, haunted by the memories of the last two hours, re-cast in the form of dreams, when he was roused by the sound of footsteps on the road.

For a moment his poor heart nearly choked him with its beating. They were the keepers. They had guessed for a cert. where he was—with Mrs. Adis, his old pal's mother. He had been a fool to come to the cottage. Nearly losing his self-control, he shrank into the corner shivering, half-sobbing. But the footsteps went by. They did not even hesitate at the door. He heard them ring away into the frosty stillness. The next minute Mrs. Adis stuck her head into the lean-to.

"That was them," she said, shortly; "a party from the Castle. I saw them go by. They had lanterns, and I saw old Crotch and the two Boormans. Maybe it 'ud be better if you slipped out now and went towards Cansiron.

You'd miss them that way and get over to Kent. There's a London train comes from Tunbridge Wells at ten to-night."

"That'd be a fine thing for me, ma'am, but I haven't the price of a ticket on me."

She went to one of the kitchen drawers. "Here's seven shillun'; it'll be your fare to London and a bit over."

For a moment he did not speak, then he said: "I don't know how to thank you, ma'am."

"Oh, you needn't thank me. I am doing it for Tom. I know how unaccountable set he is on you and always was."

"I hope you won't get into trouble because of this."

"There ain't much fear. No one's ever likely to know you've been in this cottage. That's why I'd sooner you went before Tom came back, for maybe he'd bring a pal with him, and that'd make trouble. I won't say I shan't have it on my conscience for having helped you to escape the law, but shooting a keeper ain't the same as shooting an ordinary sort of man, as we all know, and maybe he ain't so much the worse, so I won't think no more about it."

She opened the door for him, but on the threshold they both stood still, for again footsteps could be heard approaching, this time from the far south.

"Maybe it's Tom," said Mrs. Adis.

"There's more than one man there, and I can hear voices."

"You'd better go back," she said shortly. "Wait till they've passed, anyway."

With an unwilling shrug he went back into the little dusty lean-to, which he had come to hate, and she shut the door upon him.

The footsteps drew nearer. They came more slowly

and heavily this time. For a moment he thought they would pass also, but their momentary dulling was only the crossing of the strip of grass outside the door. The next minute there was a knock. It was not Tom, then.

Trembling with anxiety and curiosity, Peter Crouch put his eye to one of the numerous cracks in the lean-to door and looked through into the kitchen. He saw Mrs. Adis go to the cottage door, but before she could open it a man came quickly in and shut it behind him.

Crouch recognized Vidler, one of the keepers of Scotney Castle, and he felt his hands and feet grow leaden cold. They knew where he was then. They had followed him. They had guessed that he had taken refuge with Mrs. Adis. It was all up. He was not really hidden; there was no place for him to hide. Directly they opened the inner door they would see him. Why couldn't he think of things better. Why wasn't he cleverer at looking after himself—like other men? His legs suddenly refused to support him, and he sat down on the pile of sacks.

The man in the kitchen seemed to have some difficulty in saying what he wanted to Mrs. Adis. He stood before her silently, twisting his cap.

"Well, what is it?" she asked.

"I want to speak to you, ma'am."

Peter Crouch listened, straining his ears, for his thudding heart nearly drowned the voices in the next room. Oh, no, he was sure she would not give him away. If only for Tom's sake. . . . She was a game sort, Mrs. Adis.

"Well?" she said, sharply, as the man remained tongue-tied.

"I have brought you bad news, Mrs. Adis."

Her expression changed.

"What? It ain't Tom, is it?"

"He's outside," said the keeper.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Adis, and she moved towards the door.

"Don't, ma'am. Not till I've told you."

"Told me what? Oh, be quick, man, for mercy's sake," and she tried to push past him to the door.

"There's been a row," he said, "down by Cinder Wood. There was a chap there snaring rabbits, and Tom was walking with the Boormans and me and old Crotch down from the Castle. We heard a noise in the Eighteen-pounder Spinney, and there. . . . It was too dark to see who it was, and directly he saw us he made off—but we'd scared him, and he let fly with his gun. . . ."

He stopped speaking and looked at her, as if beseeching her to fill in the gaps of his story. In his corner of the lean-to Peter Crouch was as a man of wood and sawdust.

"Tom——" said Mrs. Adis.

The keeper had forgotten his guard, and before he could prevent her she had flung open the door.

The men outside had evidently been waiting for the signal, and they came in, carrying something on a hurdle, which they put down in the middle of the kitchen floor.

"Is he dead?" asked Mrs. Adis, without tears.

The men nodded. They could not find a dry voice like hers.

In the lean-to Peter Crouch had ceased to sweat and tremble. Strength had come with despair, for he knew he must despair now. Besides, he no longer wanted to escape from this thing that he had done. Oh, Tom!—and I was thinking it was one of them demmed keepers. Oh, Tom! and it was you that got it—got it from me! Reckon I don't want to live!

And yet life was sweet, for there was a woman at Ticehurst, a woman as staunch to him as Tom, who would go with him to the world's end even now. But he must not think of her. He had no right; his life was forfeit to Mrs. Adis.

She was sitting in the old basket armchair by the fire. One of the men had helped her into it. Another man with rough kindness had poured her out something from a flask he carried in his pocket. "Here, ma'am, take a drop of this. It'll give you strength."

"We'll go round to Ironlatch Cottage and ask Mrs. Gain to come down to you."

"Reckon this is a turble thing to have come to you, but it's the will o' Providence, as some folks say; and as for the man who did it—we've a middling good guess who he is, and he shall swing."

"We didn't see his face, but we've got his gun. He threw it into an alder when he bolted, and I swear that gun belongs to Peter Crouch, who's been up to no good since the day when Mus' Scales sacked him for stealing his corn."

"Reckon, tho', he didn't know it was Tom when he did it—he and Tom always being better friends than he deserved."

Peter Crouch was standing upright now, looking through the crack of the door. He saw Mrs. Adis struggle to her feet and stand by the table, looking down on the dead man's face. A whole eternity seemed to roll by as she stood there. He saw her put her hand into her apron pocket, where she had thrust the key of the lean-to.

"The Boormans have gone after Crouch," said Vidler, nervously breaking the silence. "They'd a notion as he'd broken through the woods Ironlatch way. There's no

chance of his having been by here? You haven't seen him to-night, ma'am?"

There was a pause.

"No," said Mrs. Adis, "I haven't seen him. Not since Tuesday." She took her hand out of her apron pocket.

"Well, we'll be getting around and fetch Mrs. Gain. Reckon you'd be glad to have her."

Mrs. Adis nodded.

"Will you carry him in there first?" and she pointed to the bedroom door.

The men picked up the hurdle and carried it into the next room. Then silently each wrung the mother by the hand and went away.

She waited until they had shut the door, then she came towards the lean-to. Crouch once more fell a-shivering. He couldn't bear it. No, he'd rather swing than face Mrs. Adis. He heard the key turn in the lock, and he nearly screamed.

But she did not come in. She merely unlocked the door, then crossed the kitchen with a heavy, dragging footstep and shut herself into the room where Tom was.

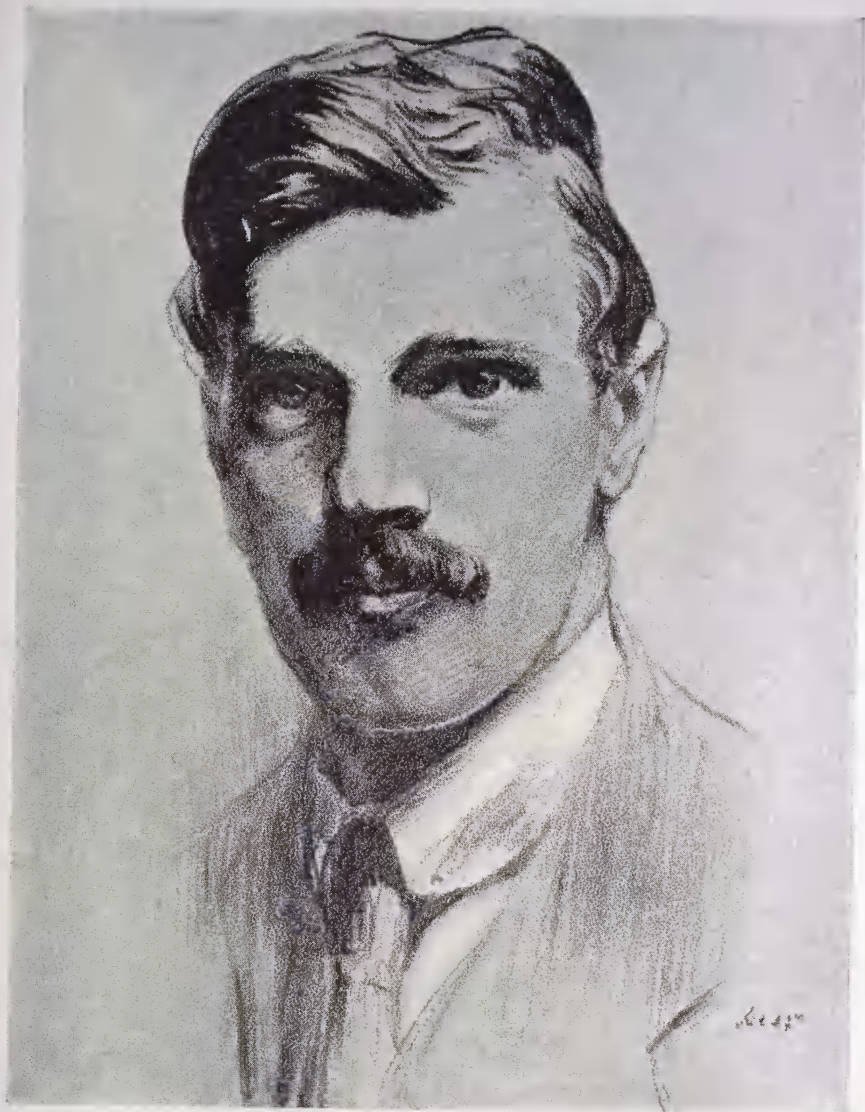
Peter Crouch knew what he must do—the only thing she wanted him to do, the only thing he could possibly do. He opened the door and silently went out.

D. H. LAWRENCE

THE SHADOW IN THE ROSE GARDEN

A RATHER small young man sat by the window of a pretty seaside cottage trying to persuade himself that he was reading the newspaper. It was about half-past eight in the morning. Outside, the glory roses hung in the morning sunshine like little bowls of fire tipped up. The young man looked at the table, then at the clock, then at his own big silver watch. An expression of stiff endurance came on to his face. Then he rose and reflected on the oil-paintings that hung on the walls of the room, giving careful but hostile attention to "The Stag at Bay." He tried the lid of the piano, and found it locked. He caught sight of his own face in a little mirror, pulled his brown moustache, and an alert interest sprang into his eyes. He was not ill-favoured. He twisted his moustache. His figure was rather small, but alert and vigorous. As he turned from the mirror a look of self-commiseration mingled with his appreciation of his own physiognomy.

In a state of self-suppression, he went through into the garden. His jacket, however, did not look dejected. It was new, and had a smart and self-confident air, sitting upon a confident body. He contemplated the Tree of Heaven that flourished by the lawn, then sauntered on to the next plant. There was more promise in a crooked apple tree covered with brown-red fruit. Glancing round,



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he broke off an apple and, with his back to the house, took a clean, sharp bite. To his surprise the fruit was sweet. He took another. Then again he turned to survey the bedroom windows overlooking the garden. He started, seeing a woman's figure; but it was only his wife. She was gazing across to the sea, apparently ignorant of him.

For a moment or two he looked at her, watching her. She was a good-looking woman, who seemed older than he, rather pale, but healthy, her face yearning. Her rich auburn hair was heaped in folds on her forehead. She looked apart from him and his world, gazing away to the sea. It irked her husband that she should continue abstracted and in ignorance of him; he pulled poppy fruits and threw them at the window. She started, glanced at him with a wild smile, and looked away again. Then almost immediately she left the window. He went indoors to meet her. She had a fine carriage, very proud, and wore a dress of soft white muslin.

"I've been waiting long enough," he said.

"For me or for breakfast?" she said lightly. "You know we said nine o'clock. I should have thought you could have slept after the journey."

"You know I'm always up at five, and I couldn't stop in bed after six. You might as well be in the pit as in bed, on a morning like this."

"I shouldn't have thought the pit would occur to you, here."

She moved about examining the room, looking at the ornaments under glass covers. He, planted on the hearth-rug, watched her rather uneasily, and grudgingly indulgent. She shrugged her shoulders at the apartment.

"Come," she said, taking his arm, "let us go into the garden till Mrs. Coates brings the tray."

"I hope she'll be quick," he said, pulling his moustache. She gave a short laugh, and leaned on his arm as they went. He had lighted a pipe.

Mrs. Coates entered the room as they went down the steps. The delightful, erect old lady hastened to the window for a good view of her visitors. Her china-blue eyes were bright as she watched the young couple go down the path, he walking in an easy, confident fashion, with his wife on his arm. The landlady began talking to herself in a soft, Yorkshire accent.

"Just of a height they are. She wouldn't ha' married a man less than herself in stature, I think, though he's not her equal otherwise." Here her granddaughter came in, setting a tray on the table. The girl went to the old woman's side.

"He's been eating the apples again, gran'," she said.

"Has he, my pet? Well, if he's happy, why not?"

Outside, the young, well-favoured man listened with impatience to the chink of the teacups. At last with a sigh of relief, the couple came in to breakfast. After he had eaten for some time, he rested a moment and said:

"Do you think it's any better place than Bridlington?"

"I do," she said, "infinitely! Besides, I am at home here—it's not like a strange seaside place to me."

"How long were you here?"

"Two years."

He ate reflectively.

"I should ha' thought you'd rather go to a fresh place," he said at length.

She sat very silent, and then, delicately, put out a feeler.

"Why?" she said. "Do you think I shan't enjoy myself?"

He laughed comfortably, putting the marmalade thick on his bread.

"I hope so," he said.

She again took no notice of him.

"But don't say anything about it in the village, Frank," she said casually. "Don't say who I am, or that I used to live here. There's nobody I want to meet, particularly, and we should never feel free if they knew me again."

"Why did you come, then?"

"Why?" Can't you understand why?"

"Not if you don't want to know anybody."

"I came to see the place, not the people."

He did not say any more.

"Women," she said, "are different from men. I don't know why I wanted to come—but I did."

She helped him to another cup of coffee, solicitously.

"Only," she resumed, "don't talk about me in the village." She laughed shakily. "I don't want my past brought up against me, you know." And she moved the crumbs on the cloth with her finger-tip.

He looked at her as he drank his coffee; he sucked his moustache, and putting down his cup, said phlegmatically:

"I'll bet you've had a lot of past."

She looked with a little guiltiness, that flattered him, down at the tablecloth.

"Well," she said, caressive, "you won't give me away, who I am, will you?"

"No," he said, comforting, laughing, "I won't give you away."

He was pleased.

She remained silent. After a moment or two she lifted her head, saying:

"I've got to arrange with Mrs. Coates, and do various

things. So you'd better go out by yourself this morning—and we'll be in to dinner at one."

"But you can't be arranging with Mrs. Coates all morning," he said.

"Oh, well—then I've some letters to write, and I must get that mark out of my shirt. I've got plenty of little things to do this morning. You'd better go out by yourself."

He perceived that she wanted to be rid of him, so that when she went upstairs, he took his hat and lounged out on the cliffs, suppressedly angry.

Presently she too came out. She wore a hat with roses, and a long lace scarf hung over her white dress. Rather nervously, she put up her sunshade, and her face was half-hidden in its coloured shadow. She went along the narrow track of flag-stones that were worn hollow by the feet of the fishermen. She seemed to be avoiding her surroundings, as if she remained safe in the little obscurity of her parasol.

She passed the church, and went down the lane till she came to a high wall by the wayside. Under this she went slowly, stopping at length by an open doorway, which shone like a picture of light in the dark wall. There in the magic beyond the doorway, patterns of shadow lay on the sunny court, on the blue and white sea-pebbles of its paving, while a green lawn glowed beyond, where a bay tree glittered at the edges. She tiptoed nervously into the courtyard, glancing at the house that stood in shadow. The uncurtained windows looked black and soulless, the kitchen door stood open. Irresolutely she took a step forward and again forward, leaning, yearning, towards the garden beyond.

She had almost gained the corner of the house when a heavy step came crunching through the trees. A gardener

appeared before her. He held a wicker tray on which were rolling great, dark red gooseberries, over-ripe. He moved slowly.

"The garden isn't open to-day," he said quietly to the attractive woman, who was poised for retreat.

For a moment she was silent with surprise. How should it be public at all?

"When is it open?" she asked, quick-witted.

"The rector lets visitors in on Fridays and Tuesdays."

She stood still, reflecting. How strange to think of the rector opening his garden to the public!

"But everybody will be at church," she said coaxingly to the man. "There'll be nobody here, will there?"

He moved, and the big gooseberries rolled.

"The rector lives at the new rectory," he said.

The two stood still. He did not like to ask her to go. At last she turned to him with a winning smile.

"Might I have *one* peep at the roses?" she coaxed, with pretty wilfulness.

"I don't suppose it would matter," he said moving aside; "you won't stop long——"

She went forward, forgetting the gardener in a moment. Her face became strained, her movements eager. Glancing round, she saw all the windows giving on to the lawn were curtainless and dark. The house had a sterile appearance, as if it were still used, but not inhabited. A shadow seemed to go over her. She went across the lawn towards the garden, through an arch of crimson ramblers, a gate of colour. There beyond lay the soft blue sea within the bay, misty with morning, and the farthest headland of black rock jutting dimly out between blue and blue of the sky and water. Her face began to shine, transfigured with pain and joy. At her feet the garden

fell steeply, all a confusion of flowers, and away below was the darkness of tree-tops covering the beck.

She turned to the garden that shone with sunny flowers around her. She knew the little corner where was the seat beneath the yew tree. Then there was the terrace where a great host of flowers shone and from this, two paths went down, one at each side of the garden. She closed her sunshade and walked slowly among the many flowers. All round were rose bushes, big banks of roses, then roses hanging and tumbling from pillars, or roses balanced on the standard bushes. By the open earth were many other flowers. If she lifted her head, the sea was upraised beyond, and the Cape.

Slowly she went down one path, lingering, like one who has gone back into the past. Suddenly she was touching some heavy crimson roses that were soft as velvet, touching them thoughtfully, without knowing, as a mother sometimes fondles the hand of her child. She leaned slightly forward to catch the scent. Then she wandered on in abstraction. Sometimes a flame-coloured, scentless rose would hold her arrested. She stood gazing at it as if she could not understand it. Again the same softness of intimacy came over her, as she stood before a tumbling heap of pink petals. Then she wondered over the white rose, that was greenish, like ice, in the centre. So, slowly, like a white, pathetic butterfly, she drifted down the path, coming at last to a tiny terrace all full of roses. They seemed to fill the place, a sunny, gay throng. She was shy of them, they were so many and so bright. They seemed to be conversing and laughing. She felt herself in a strange crowd. It exhilarated her, carried her out of herself. She blushed with excitement. The air was pure scent.

Hastily, she went to a little seat among the white roses,

and sat down. Her scarlet sunshade made a hard blot of colour. She sat quite still, feeling her own existence lapse. She was no more than a rose, a rose that could not quite come into blossom, but remained tense. A little fly dropped on her knee, on her white dress. She watched it, as if it had fallen on a rose. She was not herself.

Then she started cruelly as a shadow crossed her and a figure moved into her sight. It was a man who had come in slippers, unheard. He wore a linen coat. The morning was shattered, the spell vanished away. She was only afraid of being questioned. He came forward. She rose. Then, seeing him, the strength went from her and she sank on the seat again.

He was a young man, military in appearance, growing slightly stout. His black hair was brushed smooth and bright, his moustache was waxed. But there was something rambling in his gait. She looked up, blanched to the lips, and saw his eyes. They were black, and stared without seeing. They were not a man's eyes. He was coming towards her.

He stared at her fixedly, made an unconscious salute, and sat down beside her on the seat. He moved on the bench, shifted his feet, saying, in a gentlemanly, military voice :

"I don't disturb you—do I?"

She was mute and helpless. He was scrupulously dressed in dark clothes and a linen coat. She could not move. Seeing his hands, with the ring she knew so well upon the little finger, she felt as if she were going dazed. The whole world was deranged. She sat unavailing. For his hands, her symbols of passionate love, filled her with horror as they rested now on his strong thighs.

"May I smoke?" he asked intimately, almost secretly, his hand going to his pocket.

She could not answer, but it did not matter, he was in another world. She wondered, craving, if he recognised her—if he could recognise her. She sat pale with anguish. But she had to go through it.

"I haven't got any tobacco," he said thoughtfully.

But she paid no heed to his words, only she attended to him. Could he recognise her, or was it all gone? She sat still in a frozen kind of suspense.

"I smoke John Cotton," he said, "and I must economise with it, it is expensive. You know, I'm not very well off while these law suits are going on."

"No," she said, and her heart was cold, her soul kept rigid.

He moved, made a loose salute, rose, and went away. She sat motionless. She could see his shape, the shape she had loved with all her passion: his compact, soldier's head, his fine figure now slackened. And it was not he. It only filled her with horror too difficult to know.

Suddenly he came again, his hand in his jacket pocket.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he said. "Perhaps I shall be able to see things more clearly."

He sat down beside her again, filling a pipe. She watched his hands with the fine strong fingers. They had always inclined to tremble slightly. It had surprised her, long ago, in such a healthy man. Now they moved inaccurately, and the tobacco hung raggedly out of the pipe.

"I have legal business to attend to. Legal affairs are always so uncertain. I tell my solicitor exactly, precisely what I want, but I can never get it done."

She sat and heard him talking. But it was not he. Yet those were the hands she had kissed, there were the glistening, strange black eyes that she had loved. Yet it was not he. She sat motionless with horror and silence. He

dropped his tobacco pouch, and groped for it on the ground. Yet she must wait to see if he would recognise her. Why could she not go!—In a moment he rose.

"I must go at once," he said. "The owl is coming." Then he added confidentially: "His name isn't really the owl, but I call him that. I must go and see if he has come."

She rose too. He stood before her, uncertain. He was a handsome, soldierly fellow, and a lunatic. Her eyes searched him, and searched him, to see if he would recognise her, if she could discover him.

"You don't know me?" she asked, from the terror of her soul, standing alone.

He looked back at her quizzically. She had to bear his eyes. They gleamed on her, but with no intelligence. He was drawing nearer to her.

"Yes, I do know you," he said, fixed, intent, but mad, drawing his face nearer hers. Her horror was too great. The powerful lunatic was coming too near to her.

A man approached, hastening.

"The garden isn't open this morning," he said.

The deranged man stopped and looked at him. The keeper went to the seat and picked up the tobacco pouch left lying there.

"Don't leave your tobacco, sir," he said, taking it to the gentleman in the linen coat.

"I was just asking this lady to stay to lunch," the latter said politely. "She is a friend of mine."

The woman turned and walked swiftly, blindly, between the sunny roses, out from the garden, past the house with the blank, dark windows, through the sea-pebbled courtyard to the street. Hastening and blind, she went forward without hesitating, not knowing whither. Directly she came to the house, she went up-

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stairs, took off her hat, and sat down on the bed. It was as if some membrane had been torn in two in her, so that she was not an entity that could think and feel. She sat staring across at the window, where an ivy spray waved slowly up and down in the sea wind. There was some of the uncanny luminousness of the sunlit sea in the air. She sat perfectly still, without any being. She only felt she might be sick, and it might be blood that was loose in her torn entrails. She sat perfectly still and passive.

After a time she heard the hard tread of her husband on the floor below, and, without herself changing, she registered his movement. She heard his rather disconsolate footsteps go out again, then his voice speaking, answering, growing cheery, and his solid tread drawing near.

He entered, ruddy, rather pleased, an air of complacency about his alert, sturdy figure. She moved stiffly. He faltered in his approach.

"What's the matter?" he asked, a tinge of impatience in his voice. "Aren't you feeling well?"

This was torture to her.

"Quite," she replied.

His brown eyes became puzzled and angry.

"What is the matter?" he said.

"Nothing."

He took a few strides, and stood obstinately, looking out of the window.

"Have you run up against anybody?" he asked.

"Nobody who knows me," she said.

His hands began to twitch. It exasperated him, that she was no more sensible of him than if he did not exist. Turning on her at length, driven, he asked:

"Something has upset you, hasn't it?"

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"No, why?" she said, neutral. He did not exist for her, except as an irritant.

His anger rose, filling the veins in his throat.

"It seems like it," he said, making an effort not to show his anger, because there seemed no reason for it. He went away downstairs. She sat still on the bed, and with the residue of feeling left to her, she disliked him because he tormented her. The time went by. She could smell the dinner being served, the smoke of her husband's pipe from the garden. But she could not move. She had no being. There was a tinkle of the bell. She heard him come indoors. And then he mounted the stairs again. At every step her heart grew tight in her. He opened the door.

"Dinner is on the table," he said.

It was difficult for her to endure his presence, for he would interfere with her. She could not recover her life. She rose stiffly and went down. She could neither eat nor talk during the meal. She sat absent, torn, without any being of her own. He tried to go on as if nothing were the matter. But at last he became silent with fury. As soon as it was possible, she went upstairs again, and locked the bedroom door. She must be alone. He went with his pipe into the garden. All his suppressed anger against her who held herself superior to him filled and blackened his heart. Though he had not known it, yet he had never really won her, she had never loved him. She had taken him on sufferance. This had foiled him. He was only a labouring electrician in the mine, she was superior to him. He had always given way to her. But all the while, the injury and ignominy had been working in his soul because she did not hold him seriously. And now all his rage came up against her.

He turned and went indoors. The third time, she

heard him mounting the stairs. Her heart stood still. He turned the catch and pushed the door—it was locked. He tried it again, harder. Her heart was standing still.

"Have you fastened the door?" he asked quietly, because of the landlady.

"Yes. Wait a minute."

She rose and turned the lock, afraid he would burst it. She felt hatred towards him, because he did not leave her free. He entered, his pipe between his teeth, and she returned to her old position on the bed. He closed the door and stood with his back to it.

"What's the matter?" he asked determinedly.

She was sick with him. She could not look at him.

"Can't you leave me alone?" she replied, averting her face from him.

He looked at her quickly, fully, wincing with ignominy. Then he seemed to consider for a moment.

"There's something up with you, isn't there?" he asked definitely.

"Yes," she said, "but that's no reason why you should torment me."

"I don't torment you. What's the matter?"

"Why should you know?" she cried, in hate and desperation.

Something snapped. He started and caught his pipe as it fell from his mouth. Then he pushed forward the bitten-off mouth-piece with his tongue, took it from off his lips, and looked at it. Then he put out his pipe, and brushed the ash from his waistcoat. After which he raised his head.

"I want to know," he said. His face was greyish pale, and set uglily.

Neither looked at the other. She knew he was fired now. His heart was pounding heavily. She hated him,

but she could not withstand him. Suddenly she lifted her head and turned on him.

"What right have you to know?" she asked.

He looked at her. She felt a pang of surprise for his tortured eyes and his fixed face. But her heart hardened swiftly. She had never loved him. She did not love him now.

But suddenly she lifted her head again swiftly, like a thing that tries to get free. She wanted to be free of it. It was not him so much, but it, something she had put on herself, that bound her so horribly. And having put the bond on herself, it was hardest to take it off. But now she hated everything and felt destructive. He stood with his back to the door, fixed, as if he would oppose her eternally, till she was extinguished. She looked at him. Her eyes were cold and hostile. His workman's hands spread on the panels of the door behind him.

"You know I used to live here?" she began, in a hard voice, as if wilfully to wound him. He braced himself against her, and nodded.

"Well, I was companion to Miss Birch of Torril Hall—she and the rector were friends, and Archie was the rector's son." There was a pause. He listened without knowing what was happening. He stared at his wife. She was squatted in her white dress on the bed, carefully folding and refolding the hem of her skirt. Her voice was full of hostility.

"He was an officer—a second-lieutenant—then he quarrelled with his colonel and came out of the army. At any rate"—she plucked at her skirt hem, her husband stood motionless, watching her movements which filled his veins with madness—"he was awfully fond of me, and I was of him—awfully."

"How old was he?" asked the husband.

"When?—when I first knew him? or when he went away?——"

"When you first knew him."

"When I first knew him, he was twenty-six—now—he's thirty-one—nearly thirty-two—because I'm twenty-nine, and he is nearly three years older——"

She lifted her head and looked at the opposite wall.

"And what then?" said her husband.

She hardened herself, and said callously:

"We were as good as engaged for nearly a year, though nobody knew—at least—they talked—but—it wasn't open. Then he went away——"

"He chucked you?" said the husband brutally, wanting to hurt her into contact with himself. Her heart rose wildly with rage. Then "Yes," she said, to anger him. He shifted from one foot to the other, giving a "Ph!" of rage. There was silence for a time.

"Then," she resumed, her pain giving a mocking note to her words, "he suddenly went out to fight in Africa, and almost the very day I first met you, I heard from Miss Birch he'd got sunstroke—and two months after that he was dead——"

"That was before you took on with me?" said the husband.

There was no answer. Neither spoke for a time. He had not understood. His eyes were contracted uglily.

"So you've been looking at your old courting places!" he said. "That was what you wanted to go out by yourself for this morning."

Still she did not answer him anything. He went away from the door to the window. He stood with his hands behind him, his back to her. She looked at him. His hands seemed gross to her, the back of his head paltry.

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At length, almost against his will, he turned round, asking :

"How long were you carrying on with him?"

"What do you mean?" she replied coldly.

"I mean how long were you carrying on with him?"

She lifted her head, averting her face from him. She refused to answer. Then she said :

"I don't know what you mean by carrying on. I loved him from the first day I met him—two months after I went to stay with Miss Birch."

"And do you reckon he loved you?" he jeered.

"I know he did."

"How do you know, if he'd have no more to do with you?"

There was a long silence of hate and suffering.

"And how far did it go between you?" he asked at length, in a frightened, stiff voice.

"I hate your not-straightforward questions," she cried, beside herself with his baiting. "We loved each other, and we *were* lovers—we were. I don't care what *you* think : what have you got to do with it? We were lovers before ever I knew you——"

"Lovers—lovers," he said, white with fury. "You mean you had your fling with an army man, and then came to me to marry you when you'd done——"

She sat swallowing her bitterness. There was a long pause.

"Do you mean to say you used to go—the whole hogger?" he asked, still incredulous.

"Why, what else do you think I mean?" she cried brutally.

He shrank, and became white, impersonal. There was a long, paralysed silence. He seemed to have gone small.

"You never thought to tell me all this before I married you," he said, with bitter irony, at last.

"You never asked me," she replied.

"I never thought there was any need."

"Well, then, you *should* think."

He stood with expressionless, almost childlike set face, revolving many thoughts, whilst his heart was mad with anguish.

Suddenly she added:

"And I saw him to-day," she said. "He is not dead, he's mad."

Her husband looked at her, startled.

"Mad!" he said involuntarily.

"A lunatic," she said. It almost cost her her reason to utter the word. There was a pause.

"Did he know you?" asked the husband, in a small voice.

"No," she said.

He stood and looked at her. At last he had learned the width of the breach between them. She still squatted on the bed. He could not go near her. It would be violation to each of them to be brought into contact with the other. The thing must work itself out. They were both shocked, so much, they were impersonal, and no longer hated each other. After some minutes he left her and went out.

ARNOLD LUNN

A SCRAP OF PAPER

"We have done those things which we *ought* to have done, and there is no health in us."

—General Confession—(slightly adapted).

PREFACE

THIS is Mark's story, published with his permission and, for reasons that will appear later, at his request. I have altered nothing except the names of the characters and the name of the school. This short preface is not intended to give a plausible air to what is avowedly a work of imagination. This is a true story; I have seen the "scrap of paper," and I have tried to write down Mark's tale as he told it to me.

Mark realises that Brown may conceivably read this book. I do not think, from what I know of Brown, that "Georgian Stories" will come his way; but if it should, then Mark will perhaps suffer the penance which he asked me to impose. And yet, somehow, Brown appears to have been a kindly genial soul. The tribal vetoes so inflexible in boyhood lose much of their power as youth fades into manhood, and the Brown that reads this tale will probably take a far more tolerant view of Mark's crime than the Brown whom he knew at school.

I hope that Mark's Headmaster will read "A Scrap of Paper." I shall probably send him a copy, for he deserves the unpleasant half-hour which he will pass before he discovers the soothing formula which will allay his uneasiness.

And that is all that I need say by way of preface.

I

"My first term at school," Mark began, "was neither happy nor unhappy. I was not bullied, but I made no friends, for I possessed neither skill at games nor that cheery imprudence of manner which enables a small boy to achieve popularity.

"My room-mate, Robbins, had been in the House a term. He was a sturdy, thick-set and slow-witted youth who had taken the lowest form in the School. He resented the fact that I had won a scholarship, and had been placed as a new boy in a form which would probably prove the asylum of his declining years. He found me very useful when he stuck over a piece of construe. It was cheaper and safer to use me than a crib, and I was ready to treat him with all due respect, so that he was prepared to tolerate my existence. He was never weary of impressing me with my unworthiness. I was a 'rotten new bug' and he was a 'second term'er.' Moreover, he had captained his 'Priver' at cricket and footer, and would one day play for the House. I can see now that he was delighted to discover somebody over whom he could lord it, for the rest of the House were not impressed by Robbins. He had to walk delicately and treat a great many people with respect, and my deference was necessary to redress the balance. I displayed a humiliating anxiety to cultivate his friendship, and cherished for

long the fond illusion that Robbins would repay my assistance with his construe by some tokens of friendly feeling. This was an error, for though he graciously permitted me to work for him, he was careful to avoid all public appearance of friendship.

"In my second term I won a remove to the Lower Fifth, and here I found myself in the same form with Dick Burgess. Dick was in my House and he was everything that I was not. He was about fifteen and a half, very good looking and very popular, though he never courted popularity. You know the type; you find them in all schools, boys who are gifted with that effortless magnetism which the gods bestow on their favourites. Dick was a rising athlete, but he did not take games too seriously. He was always doing things which would have spelt disaster for anybody but Dick. He cut an important Cricket Trial to go birdsnesting: he had smoked two days before instead of the day after the Footer Final. Brown, the captain of the School and House XI, had decreed that a certain pudding was uneatable and was to be boycotted. We trembled and obeyed, and the pudding went the rounds of the tables, while the Housemaster's wife looked on with puzzled disapproval. Dick ostentatiously called for a second helping, and the whole House had to wait while he devoured it with evident relish.

"I was, as you will easily understand, much flattered to find myself in the same form with Dick. He put on no side, and treated me with casual friendliness which captivated my allegiance before the term was a week old. Of course, I did most of the work, looked out the words in the dictionary while Dick lolled in an armchair, but then I had done as much for Robbins, and had got nothing in return.

"As a member of the Lower Fifth, I escaped fagging. Robbins, with whom I still shared a room, was still a fag, and he resented my immunity. He had been in the House two terms, and went in third for the House Second XI and yet he had to devote a great deal of his valuable time to running errands for exacting Prefects. I had been in the House two terms: I was a joke at cricket, and yet I had escaped fagging. It was all wrong. As a new boy I had been patronised by Robbins, but in my second term this patronage was replaced by active hostility.

"One day Dick appeared just as Robbins was hustling me down the passage. 'I say,' he remarked, 'what's this? Fags mustn't get above themselves. Awful swank to barge into a fifth former.' Dick seized Robbins by the ear, forced him on to his knees, and kept him there until he had apologised for his hubris in assaulting a fifth former. He then urged him to confine his experiments in future to 'dirty little fags' like himself.

"Of course I was absurdly grateful. This was the first time that anybody had intervened on my behalf. I was not disposed to analyse Dick's motives too closely, though I suspected he had been inspired more by a playful desire to humble Robbins than by any friendly wish to protect me. He brushed aside my attempts to thank him, and even reproved me for not 'booting that little tick' myself. I was mortified by his genial disdain, and that same evening, I settled my account with Robbins, who showed signs of truculence the moment we were alone together. I thought of Dick and vowed not to disgrace myself. I waited till Robbins had said his say, and landed him one on the jaw. He was so surprised that the conclusion to our encounter was more rapid and more complete than I could have dared to hope. We rolled over together on the floor, hitting out with more energy than science, and then

by tacit unspoken consent broke apart and glared at each other. The fight was over; neither had won, but Robbins realised that I had ceased to be a comfortable and easy victim for his playful moods.

"I was more than rewarded when Dick, after listening gravely to my report of the encounter, burst into genial laughter, and remarked that I had more guts than he had given me credit for.

"I was only too happy that Dick should allow me to repay him by writing two proses every evening, my own and a prose artistically sprinkled with the mistakes to which Dick was partial. 'Just jam in two false concords,' Dick would say, 'old Parsons expects about two false concords in my proses. But don't overdo it. He ploughs for four false concords. And by the way, I always forget that verbs of fearing are followed by "ne." Just shove in an infinitive after "timebat." It'll make it look more homelike.'

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"Before I went to school, my father had told me the more obvious facts about sex. He disliked this embarrassing duty, but he did not shirk it. Before I had been long at school I had learned a good deal more than he could ever have told me. Our House was a bad House. These things go in phases. A slack Housemaster and a bad set, and the thing starts. Once started, the disease is more infectious than measles and much harder to eradicate. Clayton, my Housemaster, was in a difficult position, for he had only just taken over the House and his predecessor was one of those happy optimists who believe that so long as the House gets into the Footer Finals, there can be nothing much wrong with its morals. You know as much about this subject as I do, and you

know that most people take extreme views. They either pretend that it's practically unknown. One is always meeting the man who declares that he went through some big school without ever hearing the subject mentioned. Or they fly to the opposite extreme and assert that it's rampant in every school. Well, it isn't. It varies from school to school and from House to House. And one can console oneself by remembering that its effects are seldom permanent. Many a damned good man passed through this phase at school, with no more enduring results than a bout of influenza. It's a kind of moral influenza. When you and I were at school, the usual scheme was to ignore the existence of the disease, until some scandal rendered the ostrich policy impossible. And when the scandal came, the average schoolmaster always seemed to lose his head, and to revenge his own illusions by hysterical severity. A policy of *laissez faire* was followed by wholesale expulsions. Surgery rather than prevention. Amputate the offending member from the wholesome body, and all will be well. Unfortunately the result proved that a surgical operation will not cure moral cancer. I believe that the modern method is more sympathetic and understanding, and that the modern schoolmaster realises that the individual boy is less to be blamed than the monastic system which herds together a lot of boys of all ages from twelve to nineteen. I believe expulsions are rarer and curative and preventative methods more common and more successful than they were when we were boys. I have even heard of a headmaster taking one difficult case, a boy who would have been ruthlessly sacked twenty years ago, to a specialist in mental cases, who proceeded to treat the case by psycho-analysis.

"However, I'm wandering from my tale. As I said,

I soon realised that our House was one of the worst in the School. I don't remember feeling especially shocked. I wasn't much interested. The thing did not come my way, and a small boy soon takes his environment for granted. I was at first rather surprised by the casual, matter-of-fact fashion in which everybody accepted these things, but I soon ceased to bother about them one way or another. The one passionate interest of my life was Dick, and life was too full for other interests. Since I left school I have been in love once or twice, but there is nothing in a man's love for a woman so disinterested as a boy's affection for his first real friend. The real case against the unpleasant habits sometimes contracted at school is that they sully friendship, the best thing that life yields, and convert what might be a virile, ennobling affection into a sentimental, effeminate intrigue.

"Of course I was nothing to old Dick, my dog-like devotion rather amused him. He gave in return a kindly, careless friendship, which was all that I had ever dared to hope for.

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"Brown, the captain of the School and House XI, was very fond of Dick. Brown was a genial blood, very popular with the fags because he seldom beat them. He was supposed to be one of the finest bats that the School had produced.

"He used to come into Dick's room while we were preparing our construe, and he proved rather a disturbing influence. Dick treated him with scant respect and used to make me tremble with delicious horror by his audacity. He never tired of pulling Brown's leg, and Brown was a tremendous blood, whereas Dick, though a very promising athlete and popular in the House, was only a

youngster who had got his House Colours much sooner than might have been expected. Brown did not seem to resent Dick's badinage; in fact he liked it. Sometimes Dick managed to provoke him, but Brown's rage was always short lived, though the ensuing scuffles were very disturbing to my humble self and often had disastrous results next morning if Dick or I had the bad luck to be put on to construe.

"I had begun to work for the Fifth Form Shakespeare Prize, and had obtained permission to work by candle-light after 'Lights-out.' I had just settled down one evening when I remembered that I had left my books in Dick's room. The Floor Prefect gave me leave to get them.

"I blundered into Dick's room, and turned on the light. Next moment I was back in the passage again pursued by a gruff 'Get out, damn you' from Brown.

"I felt the same embarrassment that one feels if one intrudes on a lady who has forgotten to lock the bathroom door. That was all.

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"A few days later I was taken ill. Appendicitis was discovered and I was operated on. After the operation, which had been more complicated than is usual, I was sent home to recuperate.

"My father was the Vicar of a poor and populous East End Parish before they made him a Dean. He was a good parson, moderately High Church, and a great power in his Parish. He had the makings of a mighty hunter, and it was the accident of Fate which made him a hunter of Evil rather than of elephants. He did not know fear. He helped to raid an opium den and was nearly killed for his pains; he risked an action for

damages by attacking the local Music Hall in a vigorous pamphlet, and all but incurred an action for criminal libel by attacking a highly placed sinner. There was nothing of the Pecksniff about him. He rejoiced in risks, and these campaigns were a useful outlet for his superabundant energy. He was always chasing about looking for trouble, and like a true hunter he had a queer sympathy for the quarry.

"While I was in bed after the operation, my father met a friend of his whose son was in another House. Bob, it appeared, had a low opinion of our House. 'Bob says that Clayton's is the worst House in the school.' Bob, in fact, had implied that our House was like Rome under Nero. Of course, I am quite sure that Bob had been plagued by his father, who was rather like mine in some respects, and that Bob had warded off an inconvenient catechism about his own House and his own morals, by expressing great indignation at the character of Clayton's. I knew Bob, and moral indignation was not one of his failings.

"When I recovered, my father sent for me one afternoon and began to cross-examine me. I loathed this kind of discussion; as a small boy I had rather enjoyed his revelations of the elementary facts about sex. I remember swanking to my younger brother that I knew how babies came, and rubbing it in that he was much too young to share this exciting knowledge. When I was at my private school, I reported to my father the grave news that some of my young friends were in the habit of discussing forbidden subjects. He passed on this news to the Headmaster and the six little sinners were sent for. I don't know how the Headmaster kept a straight face as these terrified infants unfolded their lachrymose confessions. One of them admitted to giggling at a photograph

of a nude statue. Another had cracked a joke about fig leafs; a third had discussed the origin of babies. Poor little wretches, what was their crime? The overwhelming majority of novels, plays, and poems are inspired by the subject which the world has always deemed the most interesting thing in life, and why small boys should not show some interest in matters which intrigue their elders so tremendously, I do not know. Anyhow I gained kudos from this affair, and was given to believe that I had behaved nobly. Of course small boys are, for the most part, neither moral nor immoral. On the other hand, they are prone to priggishness, and it was priggishness, not abstract love of purity, which inspired my rôle on that occasion.

"I had not been long at Barton before I realised that sneaking at Barton was in a different category to sneaking at a private school. A boy who sneaked at Barton left by the same train as his victim. There is much to be said against, but there is something to be said for the schoolboy code in such matters.

"And I had changed. At twelve talks about sex had interested me; at fourteen they embarrassed me. A small boy may indulge in Rabelaisian conversation with his contemporaries but when his elders broach the subject, his reserve is almost virginal. And so when my father opened the ball, and began to ply me with questions about the morals of the House, I felt and I looked abjectly uncomfortable. He guessed that I had something to conceal, and his catechism became more and more insistent. You don't know my father; when he gets his teeth into something he doesn't let go in a hurry. The Parish had been quiet, and he was feeling restless. His volcanic energy demanded some outlet.

"Before long he had extracted from me an admission

that I had seen things which would prove damning evidence, and then suddenly I realised that he was going to make me turn informer.

“‘You want to make me sneak,’ I cried. ‘Well, I’m not going to.’ My father said nothing for a moment, merely drummed with his fingers on the desk. ‘I’m not going to worry you any more to-night,’ he said at last, ‘sleep on it, and pray for guidance.’

“I did not pray for guidance, because God, I felt, was on my father’s side. God, schoolmasters and parents had their code, very different to the schoolboy code.

“Next day my father sent for me and put his cards on the table. ‘I’ve been thinking it over,’ he began, ‘and there’s no help for it. You must let me tell your headmaster. Here is a boy who is corrupting younger boys. You admit it. You have evidence which leaves no loophole. Every term, new boys come to the House, many from the best of homes where the merest suspicion of this kind of thing would cause unspeakable distress. Unless drastic steps are taken, the House will go from bad to worse. And this will be your fault, because you have not had the courage to expose sin, and to prevent other boys being exposed to corrupting influence.’

“It was all unanswerable, as pat as one of his best sermons. I sat there feeling quite helpless. I had nothing to say; for I was not clever enough to translate into words the intangible loyalties of boyish morality. The schoolboy code is not derived from Moses nor from Christ, and the tribal morality of youth has little connection with Christianity. In that code ‘morality’ does not mean sexual morality. The code of schoolboy and the code of the gentleman condone much that the Church condemns and condemn many things which the Church applauds. ‘Thou shalt not let thy pal down.’ This is

the first and the greatest of the commandments in the Decalogue of the Public Schools.

"Meanwhile my father talked on. I just sat there and shook my head. I was not convinced. Even to-day I am not convinced that the only cure for this evil is expulsion. These hysterical outbursts of vindictiveness seem to me all wrong. Anyhow my father got no change out of me.

"And then my mother intervened. Her view of the situation was less impersonal than my father's. He was concerned for the House, for the young boys who came every term. But for my mother, the House was merely the environment in which her son was living. A wicked boy was corrupting that environment and I was in danger. Clearly the wicked boy must go. It was all so clear to her, and she could not understand my obstinate refusal to see things as she saw them. I was very fond of mother, but I had begun to realise that the point of view of mothers and of schoolboys differed on many important points. I resented the fact that my father had brought her into the discussion. It was unfair. I knew that I had either to agree, or to involve myself in one of those hopeless arguments where both parties start from conflicting premises. Mother could not understand that a chap simply could *not* speak. It wasn't done.

"Well, I need not bore you by describing the whole dreary business. The process lasted a week—yes, I held out for seven solid days. I was not well; I was still feeling the effects of the operation and I was only fourteen. The odds were against me. On one side stood a masterful man determined to get his own way, and possessed of a semi-hypnotic power of convincing you against your will; on the other side a young boy. My father never owned himself beaten; there were moments when he all

but mesmerised me into believing that the betrayal of Brown would be a noble act of moral courage. In spite of a conviction that my case was good I felt the ground slipping from under me. My case was instinctive, founded on the subconscious loyalties of boy nature, but I lacked the skill to present my belief. I could only remain silent and unpersuaded. Had I been convinced, had I surrendered because I admitted the strength of my father's case, and had I been persuaded that I ought to purge the House of an evil influence, I should not regret my action. But it is the motive which alone gives virtue to the deed, and if I did right, I did right from cowardly not from noble motives. It was neither reason, nor the tardy awakening of conscience that ultimately won my consent. My father had appealed to my conscience, and that queer patchwork of categorical imperatives, founded neither on the Old nor on the New Testament, had rejected his appeal. It was a poor thing, this conscience of mine, a poor thing but my own; and my father was not really appealing to it, but appealing from my conscience to his own. My still small voice was too feeble to prevail against the clarion confidence of the paternal conscience.

"I gave in: my father wrote to Clayton, but before I gave away any names, I was determined to protect Dick against any possible accident.

"I went upstairs and undressed slowly. I said my prayers, and did my best to live up to the rôle which my father had selected for me, the rôle of the hero of school sermons. I tried to convince myself that I had shown moral courage in defying schoolboy tradition . . . it was no good. I did not feel noble: I felt mean. I was not cut out for the hero of a tract. The still small voice that had been drowned in my father's presence made itself heard. 'You're a mean sneak,' it whispered. 'What's

that about moral courage? Nonsense. You're not giving in out of courage, moral or otherwise, but because you hadn't the guts to stand out.'

"I had been trapped. The older generation had proved too strong.

"I rolled into bed, too weary to sleep, too hopeless even to indulge in the luxury of a good solid weep.

"I ought to tell you something about my Housemaster. I had always liked Clayton. He was a man of real sympathy and understanding, and displayed these gifts not only with promising boys but towards those who stood in most need of encouragement. He had taken over the House two terms before I came, and had realised from the first that he was up against a tough proposition. He did not fall into the easy temptation of treating the non-apparent as if it were non-existent. It is easy to place implicit trust in the Prefects and to assume that the pleasant open youth could not possibly be guilty of anything underhand or immoral. Immoral boys seldom wear the debauched and furtive appearance with which tracts credit them. Nothing, for instance, could be heartier and cheerier than old Brown. The average schoolboy sinner does not suffer from conscience. He is only doing what others do and others did. He is anxious not to be found out, but his ill deeds do not trouble his sleep, nor mar his candid genial intercourse with his Housemaster. Old Brown had his code, and he lived up to it. He did not bully, and he did not put on unnecessary swank. He would never have played a dirty trick, would rather have lost a match than win it by an unsporting advantage, had never let his pal down, and scrupulously shunned those things which are not cricket. And so there was no reason why he should not look his fellow-men in the face.

"Many Housemasters would have persuaded themselves, without difficulty, that Brown was an excellent fellow. Clayton, however, as I learned when Head of the House, was untiring in his efforts to get below the surface. In those early days he had no illusions, but he was powerless to act. The Head of the House was well meaning but hopelessly weak. The House Prefects were either indifferent, immoral, or both. What can a Housemaster do in such circumstances? He is dependent for his evidence on accident. A boy who has left may tell his father something; things may come round, but direct information from the boys themselves is unknown—at least at Barton.

"Clayton lost no time in coming over to see my father. He was only too relieved to have something tangible to work on. For a conscientious man the knowledge that his House is going wrong coupled with the inability to lay hold of the offenders is one long nightmare. Meanwhile I had been doing some hard thinking, and when I met Clayton, I began by saying that I should not give away any names, until I was assured that only one boy should be punished.

" 'I am only asking you to give me the name of the elder boy,' he replied.

" 'I know,' I said, 'but other names might come out accidentally. Once a row starts, one never knows who may get into trouble.'

" 'I don't think,' said Clayton, 'I can bind myself not to take action should another name come out accidentally.'

" 'Then I can't tell you anything,' I said firmly.

"Clayton and my father looked at each other.

" 'I think Mark is entitled to that,' said my father.

" 'Perhaps he is,' said Clayton. 'Well, then, I promise.'

"I felt confident that Clayton was sincere, but I had no confidence in the system. I could not have analysed my distrust: I think all small boys instinctively do distrust their elders in such matters. They must realise instinctively that the claims of moral reformation often make short work of the minor obligations of honour.

"I was taking no chances. Whatever happened, Dick must be protected beyond all possibility of mischance.

"'Would you mind,' I asked, 'putting that in writing?'

"Both men looked astonished. My father smiled grimly, because he guessed I must have absorbed a favourite remark of his that there was nothing like black and white. 'Putting it on record,' was what my father called this process. Well, I was going to put it on record that Dick must not be touched.

"'If Mark wants it in writing,' he said, 'he had better have it, then there can be no possible mistake.'

"Clayton nodded impatiently, and hastily scribbled a few lines on a piece of paper, and showed them to me. I suggested a few alterations; my father re-drafted what I had suggested, and Clayton signed the contract. My father carefully locked away the scrap of paper. I recovered it later, and I've kept it carefully to this day. I've got it in a drawer in my desk, and I'll get it out. . . .

"Here it is," Mark continued, "you'd better read it."

"No boy, who may be accidentally implicated by anything which comes to light in the process of examining the boy, whose name will be given later, shall be punished. It is understood that only *one* boy shall be punished as the result of any communication given by Mark Sewell.

"(Signed) JOHN CLAYTON."

"Pretty definite, isn't it? At least I thought so. Dick, I firmly believed, was safe.

"I went back to school next day. After lunch, Clayton sent for me: he seemed nervous. 'It's possible,' he began, 'that Brown may bluff. He may demand evidence. We should then be in an awkward position, unless you came forward to confront him.'

"At first I refused flatly to be dragged in. 'I knew you would not be satisfied,' I said; 'I knew you would want more.'

"There was a long and pregnant silence. I was trapped again. I realised that it would be cowardly to refuse the logical consequences of the rôle which I had accepted, and agreed. Of course I knew that I should walk from the Headmaster's study into a cab, and have my luggage sent after me, but the fact that I should have to leave the same day as Brown did not trouble me. What troubled me was the prospect of confronting Brown. I dreaded the contempt which he would display, and above all, yes above all, I dreaded Dick's verdict.

"Brown was to be left in ignorance of the fate in store for him till the following morning. He dropped in that evening as we were preparing con together. He had made a century for the School against the M.C.C. on the previous day and the effect had not worn off. Dick was in high spirits, and there was the usual banter.

" 'I've said it before,' said Dick, 'and I'll say it again, that I've never seen a century knocked up in a more fluky fashion. You were missed three times before you scored ten.'

" 'Rot,' said Brown, 'I only gave one fair chance the whole time. I don't call it a chance if only a man with arms like a gorilla could get to it.'

" 'Simply luck,' retorted Dick. 'You're not going to pretend you placed those shots just wide of the fielders. You were just hitting them up into the air anyhow.'

"For reply Brown fell upon Dick and pummelled him. Usually I enjoyed these bouts, but on that fateful evening I would have preferred anything rather than this light-hearted banter.

" 'By the way,' said Brown, 'what's the matter with the old Man. He was devilish grumpy at lunch. I tried some genial chat but couldn't get a word out of him.'

" 'He looked black as sin,' said Dick.

" 'Didn't even congratulate me on my century,' grumbled Brown; 'damned bad manners. He might take an interest in his House, and show some signs of being bucked when a man in his House gets a century.'

"I felt a perverse desire to explain why Clayton had looked as black as sin to shatter Brown's careless confidence with a few illuminating words.

"That night I woke from feverish dreams to wakeful intervals of despair. Again and again I found myself in the Headmaster's study confronting Brown—Brown swollen to nightmare proportions. And then the scene changed and I dreamt that I was flying from an infuriated mob of boys. And Dick was there, and Dick drew aside with a gesture of contempt, and even in that moment of bitter humiliation I was thankful that he was safe. And then again the scene changed and somebody said that Dick was wanted by the Headmaster, and I dashed off to find the fatal scrap of paper, and the housemaid said she had used it to light the fire, and Clayton was vague and did not seem to remember anything about it, and then I awoke to a wakefulness more terrible than any dream.

"Next morning I failed in construe, and returned to breakfast feeling tired and ill. Brown swaggered into Hall in great spirits. He bumped into Jenkins, the Head of the House, and remarked: 'Jenky, my boy, you take up

too much room.' The fags tittered, but 'Jenky's' revenge for many a slighting insult was nearer than 'Jenky' knew.

"I stared at my plate; the food seemed to stick in my throat. I wondered whether everybody noticed my miserable suspense but the Hall was full of the noise of forty hungry people consuming breakfast. Above this confused medley one voice seemed to predominate. Brown's cheerful laugh and banter seemed to carve themselves out of the prevailing confusion. I saw him throw a crust of bread at Dick who had just come in. . . .

"No Empire is less challenged than that of a School Blood, but Brown's reign of triumph was drawing to a close, and the thought of his imminent ruin overwhelmed me with sick shame for the part which I had played in it.

"The House butler came into the Hall and murmured something to Brown. I looked down at my plate, but I could hear Brown's surprised reply. 'I wonder what the old Man wants. He might wait till I'd finished my breakfast. All right, if he wants me at once, I'll come. Rotten bad manners.'

"Brown went out grumbling.

"I reached my room just in time to see Clayton and Brown walking up to the Headmaster's. My room overlooked the street, and I shall never forget Brown's face. I felt the complete, unspeakable cad. What had old Brown done to me, that I should betray him? He had always been very decent; he was a genial, cheery person. His flesh was weak, but he had no other vices, and his sins, such as they were, were the sins which he had learned from others.

"I picked up a book and tried to read. I read without taking in the meaning of a line, but I must have absorbed it subconsciously, for years later I picked up the same

book and was puzzled by a vague feeling of horror, until I realised and remembered the conditions under which I had first read it. . . . I waited and waited for the fateful summons to the Headmaster's study, and I knew that it would not be Brown's eyes that would drop with shame when we met. Minutes passed like months. I threw away the book, and stared out of the window with dim eyes, until, at last, Clayton and Brown reappeared.

"My first feeling of wild relief that I should not have to face Brown in the Headmaster's study was soon swamped by less selfish emotion. Something in Brown's broken walk, so unlike his usual healthy swagger, went to my heart. The change was tragic: the change was my own doing. Down in the yard a boy was singing a song very popular at the time:

" 'Good-bye, my Blue-bell,
Good-bye to you.'

"I remained at the window, staring into vacancy. Suddenly I saw Clayton reappear.

"He was not alone.

"I leant out of the window, stiff with horror, for Dick was walking beside him, Dick transformed, broken, with an ashy face that I would to God I could forget.

"My next clear memory is of finding myself in Clayton's study. I was mad with rage. Hell knows a worse fury than a woman scorned.

"Clayton was very unhappy. I gathered that Brown had made a desperate effort to save Dick, thrown up the sponge as far as he was concerned, and pleaded earnestly for Dick. He swore that he had led Dick astray and that Dick was blameless. He little realised that his chivalrous confession revealed what need never have been known.

"This much I gathered from Clayton.

"'But the paper,' I shrieked, 'the paper. You promised not to expel anybody but Brown. You signed your promise.'

"'I told the Headmaster,' said Clayton wearily, 'but he said that the matter was outside of my jurisdiction, that the discipline of the School would suffer if Brown went and Dick stayed. It was the same offence, and he could not discriminate between the two offenders.'

"'But you ought to have thought of that before,' I sobbed; 'you ought to have thought of all that before you made me sneak. I didn't want to get Brown sacked. You made me. What do I care whether it was unfair to keep Dick and send Brown away. You've sacked Dick, and Dick was the only man who was decent to me, and I've ruined him. Oh, why was I such a fool as to believe you, you meant to do it, you meant to do it all along.'

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"'But surely,' I asked, 'your father insisted that they should honour their bond?'

"My father wasn't there," said Mark bitterly. "Of course it's easy to say I should have telegraphed for him, and asked him to go with me to the Headmaster. But I was only a boy with all the boy's fatalism—for all boys are fatalists in such matters. I felt quite hopeless: I was up against something which I did not understand. You see I had trusted so implicitly to that written undertaking, and when that proved useless, I could not imagine that anything else would succeed. If they could go back on that, well they could go to any lengths.

"My father did come down and see me a week later, and he sympathised with me. I am sure that had I appealed to him at the time, he would have done his best,

but no man fights at his best when he is fighting against the grain, and I suspect that my father was not sorry to know that my friend, who on the facts of the case was not scrupulously moral, had been sent away. I dare say he felt that I was better without such a friend. You see, he didn't know Dick.

"Did the House ever find out about your share in the business?"

"No, they didn't. But I had some terrible moments. An odd incident occurred which no self-respecting novelist would dream of using, because in fiction it would simply appear as a clumsy and stupid invention. But life is much more pointless than fiction. . . . I was going along to my room one morning, when a boy in the School XI stopped me. He disliked me for some reason or other, and often amused himself at my expense. 'Hallo, young Sewell,' he said, 'you look pretty green. Well, it's all up . . . we know all about you.'

"I all but collapsed, but managed to reply feebly, 'What do you mean?' 'Oh, we know, we know,' he said darkly. In another minute, I should have given myself away, but somebody called him and he went off.

"I spent a hideous day. I invented trivial excuses for visiting various Prefects, anxious to learn the worst. They seemed surprised, but none of them greeted me with obvious malevolence. The day dragged its weary length along. I waited every moment for the inevitable outburst, but nothing happened.

"What was your tormentor getting at?"

"I haven't the least idea. He was just pulling my leg, I suppose. I told you the incident was quite meaningless. It was just one of those pointless coincidences that do occur in life, but are barred in fiction. I fully expected, you see, that Brown or Dick had guessed the truth and

would write to their pals. I can still see the House butler doling out the letters at breakfast, and until those letters were opened, I could not taste my food. I used to scan the faces of the Bloods as they perused their correspondence. I remember one morning I had a conviction that my fate was settled. Thorp, the boy who had told me that all was known, brooded for some minutes over a letter with a puzzled frown. I scanned his face much as a criminal tries to read the verdict in the faces of the Jury as they file into the Box. I do not know to this day what was in Thorp's letter but what I feared was certainly not there.

"I had to listen to unending discussions on the question of the day. The House was thoroughly disturbed, for it was annoying to feel that Clayton seemed to know more than they suspected. They began to feel that they underrated his intelligence, and a few modest sinners paid him the compliment of destroying their favorite briars. It was clear that Brown had not been caught in *flagrante delicto*, and the House devoted themselves to suspecting various innocent folk of having sneaked. 'Jenky,' the Head of the House, was a hot favourite for three days, and the House discussed in grim detail the most appropriate punishment. On the fourth day, 'Jenky' succeeded in persuading the Prefects that he was entirely innocent of any attempt to reform their morals. The butler, matron, and Housemaster's wife were in turn suspected, but nothing definite could be proved.

"I found it difficult to keep still during these rambling discussions. I felt a perverse temptation to exclaim, 'You all think yourselves damned clever, but you know nothing, absolutely nothing. I'm the only man who knows.'

"I could hear the chorus of excited comment that

would follow. 'How the devil do *you* know?' and I could form an accurate forecast of what would follow when I explained.

"But nothing happened. The Cock House Match and the near approach of the holidays gave the House something else to think about. I fancy that I was not the only member of the House who had been living in suspense. Others, for different reasons, had been feeling acutely uncomfortable. Brown's fate was so mysterious that nobody knew who would be the next victim, and when the term ended without further catastrophe, the relief was general.

"This story," continued Mark, "ought to end as Wilde would have finished it. The day when I showed moral courage and performed an unpleasant public duty, ought to have been the turning-point in my life. I ought to have gone steadily to the bad, and provided you with a pleasing and paradoxical curtain. But I'm telling you a true story, and I neither went to the bad, nor to the good. I was extremely careful never to discuss or to allow my father to discuss anything connected with the House again. I thought out things for myself. Up to this crisis I had more or less accepted my elder's code as infallible. This does not mean that I did not often break the rules which they laid down, only that I felt that their ethical system was sound. I ceased to believe in their infallibility. I realised that the older generation could behave in a fashion which seemed to me, at least, grossly dishonourable, and this discovery shook my faith in them, and forced me to work out my own code, independent of their prejudices. I dare say this was rather a good thing.

"Incidentally I gave a great deal of trouble to such masters who were not good disciplinarians. I earned a reputation as rather a troublesome person, and though I

did enough work to reach the Sixth fairly rapidly, I did not do any more work than was necessary to get a remove every term. Nothing, however, could shake Clayton's confidence in my integrity. Give a dog a good name, and you simply cannot hang him. Clayton was convinced that I was an ally in the campaign against impurity, and made me head of the House over the heads of two very worthy Sixth formers, to their great disgust and perplexity. Such was my reward for the one act in my life of which I feel thoroughly ashamed.

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"Well, that's my story," said Mark, "and I've told it to you because you'll understand. A confessor should have the same point of view and code as the penitent. At Oxford I was interested in religion, and though never converted to Catholicism, I belong to a very 'spiky' set, who were doing their best to bring Anglicanism in line with Rome. I often used to wonder what would happen, if I thought as they did, and made a practice of Confession. I should have begun by confessing the usual sins of youth, for which I neither then nor now feel any special remorse. One soon forgets these things. I should then have proceeded to explain that there was one act in my life for which I continued to feel the bitterest remorse. Here, I suppose, the priest would have pricked up his ears and murmured something about no son being past forgiveness in the eyes of God. I should then have told him my story, and the effect should have been interesting. How could he grant me absolution for the one deed of my boyhood which scores high marks from orthodox standpoints?

"And that's why I am confessing to you, Father Lunn. You can see my point of view.

“‘I do see it,’ said I, ‘and I think you were the victim of circumstances. The Headmaster is the real villain of the piece.’

“Perhaps,” replied Mark, “but he was in a difficult position. So was Clayton, and so was my father. I don’t blame my father for feeling that Brown ought to go. You’re a father, aren’t you? What would you do if you discovered that your boy was in a thoroughly immoral house?

“‘God knows,’ said I.

“I don’t want to make excuses for myself,” said Mark, “but I try to console myself that a case could be made out—even for me. I expect you are imagining what you would do if your father had acted as mine did; and unconsciously you are seeing yourself as a man confronted by an older man. Well, that is not quite fair. As one grows older one soon learns to put up a resistance to the parental point of view. One forms one’s own code . . . one criticises, examines and sometimes rejects the code of the older generation. But a boy accepts his father, and a boy of fourteen can’t argue. I had been brought up in the Puritan tradition as regards sins of the flesh. My mother had rubbed it into me that it was inconceivable that I should sin in this way, as such enormous trouble had been taken to protect me by advice, prayers and so forth. When I was at school this did not affect me very much. I accepted the point of view of my contemporaries, but once back home, I felt that my father, like the Pope, was infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* on faith and morals. . . . And my father always spoke *ex cathedra*. . . . Against his clear-cut uncompromising creed, I could only put the vague and indefinite promptings of the boyish code. And I had not thought out that code. . . . It was instinctive, not intellectual. And you

know my father had a case. In many schools schoolboy honour makes an exception—for Browns. I know schools where Prefects who get rid of Browns are considered to have done the right thing even by the fags. After all Browns are not an asset to any school, are they? Now imagine a man of my father's terrific personality and iron determination putting that case, day after day, to a small wretch of fourteen, and the result seems rather obvious, doesn't it? I think at seventeen I should have won, but at fourteen I had no chance. And at least I stood firm where Dick was concerned. I felt convinced that I had saved Dick.

"‘That's sound enough,’ I replied, ‘I honestly do not blame you, but I do think Clayton let you down badly.’

"Well, anyhow, Clayton had to act. It's easy to say that he ought not to have given me that pledge unless he meant to stick to it. But events moved too fast. He was quite knocked up by the whole business, and did not seem to realise quite what he had promised. And, of course, he never really understood my point of view. I'll show you a letter of his which I still keep, as a curiosity. . . . Here it is:

"‘MY DEAR MARK,— I am sending you a little book, as a token of my gratitude. I know what this horrible business cost you. It is always difficult to decide in favour of a higher code and against the code of the society in which one lives. Your action has purged the House of a bad influence and has saved other boys from evil. You have had a terrible experience, but character is forged in tests such as this. . . .’

"When I first read that letter I was puzzled by its obvious sincerity, for contempt for my action had become

so ingrained, that I could not realise that Clayton, at heart, did not despise me, much as the Crown despises the man who turns King's evidence, however useful his evidence may be. . . . Apparently, Clayton really admired what I had done. I found this very puzzling. . . .

"I did not blame him for his share in the business, nor did I blame the Headmaster. Boys are in some ways, very tolerant. They learn to allow for the different angle from which their elders look at life. I should never have forgotten a boy who had let me down, as the Headmaster let me down, but then one does not judge headmasters by the same high standards. Headmasters are Olympian and aloof; you can no more be angry with them than with God.

"And so I dismissed Clayton's letter as an example of the blindness of older people to the standpoint of youth. 'Character is forged in tests such as this.' I did gain something, but I lost my self-respect, and the experience I gained certainly did not forge my character for good. It made me cynical. I realised that where 'morality' is concerned it is unwise to expect a schoolmaster to keep faith. And such knowledge hardly inspired me with respect for the official code, as preached from the school pulpit. The very word 'morality' is loosely used, and has come to signify merely one form of morality. I suppose the Headmaster would have been pained had I accused him of immorality, and yet it's just as immoral to break faith with a boy, as to commit adultery. A boy's sense of honour is a queer thing, and once those whom he respects have let him down, it's all up with the code which they preach.

"Schoolmaster honour, so it seemed, was not the same as schoolboy honour. They did not seem to understand

my standards, and I could not be expected to sympathise with theirs. Clayton seemed to think that I could look back with pride on my share in this miserable business. His whole letter displayed a failure to realise that my conscience might not perhaps tally with his standards. All I could see was that they had used me for base ends, that they had forced me into a position in which I had become the betrayer of poor old Dick. They had outraged the most stubborn of boyish instincts, his instinct of unwavering loyalty to his friend. They had made of me a traitor and then when their work was done, they could believe, in all sincerity, that 'character is forged in tests such as this. . . .'

"Well, Father Lunn, the Penitent has finished. *Mea culpa mea maxima culpa*. The contrition is genuine, but before Absolution there must be reparation and penance, must there not? Reparation is impossible, and the only reasonable penance would have been to confess to the House. So I'm afraid your priestly offices will come too late.

" 'You could still tell Dick,' I murmured. 'I dare say that would relieve your conscience.'

"I can't tell Dick," said Mark sadly.

" 'Why not ?' "

"Dick is dead," said Mark, "and I was with the old man when he died.

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"We met again," continued Mark, "outside the Menin Gate. I had come out of the trenches two days before and I was wandering up the Menin road when suddenly I saw somebody whose walk seemed familiar. And then Dick turned, greeted me with joy, and shook me warmly

by the hand. I blushed furiously but I don't think Dick noticed.

"'Come and have a jaw,' said Dick.

"We sat down on the grassy bank that slopes down to the Moat which winds round Ypres. We lit our pipes, and lay back on the young grass. It was May, the May of '15, and Ypres looked a sorry sight, though there were still a few buildings which had escaped.

"It was one of those mornings when one could almost forget the war. The few lazy shells that droned through the air hardly interrupted the suggestion of a temporary truce. The war seemed unreal. I had just come out from a loathsome week in the line and after the desolating ugliness of the front line trenches, it was delightful to lie on the cushiony grass, and watch the lazy smoke coil upwards, and feel that life was stirring in the sap of the trees, and forget for a moment that those same leaves which spring was unfolding would be swept away by shrapnel long before autumn turned them to gold. Do you remember the lilac round the Ypres walls? A flaming defiant colour, a token of the eternal resurrection against the black death of the ruined city. . . but all this has nothing to do with Dick. I happen to remember the look of the place, because, in spite of the unseen barrier between Dick and me, I thrilled with joy to be near him again, and when all was over I went back more than once to that grassy shelf and tried to recapture the memory of that brief, but golden hour.

"For at first I was only too glad to see Dick again, and it was not till later that I began to feel the overpowering need to shatter our intimacy by confession.

"We gossiped aimlessly for a time. Both of us avoided all mention of Barton. We talked of the things that one did talk about out there, anything, in fact but

the War. And then suddenly Dick said, 'I met old Brown a few days ago.' I blushed, and cursed myself for blushing. 'Yes, I saw his name in the *School Mag*.'

" 'I don't take in the *School Mag*,' said Dick curtly.

" 'He got a D.S.O., didn't he?'"

" 'Yes, he did damned well on the Marne.'

"There was a long, embarrassing silence.

" 'I never met the old man again till I ran into him outside "Pop." He told me a queer story. It seems that it was just the most damnable bit of bad luck that I was sacked. When they sent for him, he didn't realise that they knew nothing about me, and he led off by doing his best to get me off. He was doing all he knew to save me—a great sportsman—and all he did was to get me sacked too.'

" 'What rotten luck,' I murmured, weakly.

" 'Yes, wasn't it? He told me that he meant to write to me about it, but he hadn't the nerve. Said he felt too cheap about it, could have shot himself when he saw how they'd diddled him. My God! Can't you see them pricking up their ears when he mentioned my name. How they'd nail him down? How bucked they'd be to be able to sack two people instead of one! The whole thing was just a try on. They knew nothing definite, it seems, and were just bluffing. They must have been braced with their success.'

" 'Yes, they must have been braced,' I agreed bitterly.

"Dick stopped and lit a cigarette.

" 'Of course, I told the old man not to worry. He'd done his best for me, and it was just bad luck.'

"Brown, then, had felt 'pretty cheap' and hadn't 'had the nerve to write about it.' And yet confession had been easy for Brown, for he had only blundered in a heroic attempt to save his friend. His tactics were weak, but his

motives beyond criticism. In my case, tactics and motives were alike to blame. I had done my best to save Dick, too, but I had failed, just as Brown had failed. Something insistent prompted me to follow Brown's example, and unburden my soul by confession.

"I began nervously:

" 'I say, Dick, I was awfully fed up when you were sacked. . . . '

" 'Not half so fed up as I was,' interrupted Dick. 'I don't want to grouse. I suppose I asked for it. . . . I shouldn't have minded so much, if it hadn't been for the governor. He's a parson, and he'd lived pretty tight to send me to the old place. Been there himself, you know. He was always so bucked when I did anything, pulled off my House colours and so forth. He was very decent to me, and when I came back, it just knocked him clean out. He didn't blaze at me. I could have stood that, he just cried like a baby . . . it was damnable . . . one doesn't often see a man cry. He was very decent to me, poor old man.'

"Dick, I reflected, was not making confession easy.

" 'Luckily,' he went on, 'I've not got a mother. She died a year before I was sacked. . . . I wasn't sorry, either. . . . '

" 'Dick,' I began desperately. . . .

"Dick ignored my interruption.

" 'You know, Mark,' he went on, 'I can't help feeling that the whole thing was beastly cruel. I was only fifteen at the time, and should never have got into that mess, if I hadn't been a damned side too popular. I assure you, it didn't amuse me. But a small boy's head is easily turned, when Bloods begin to take notice of him. It was the same with old Brown. He'd been put through it as a kid. He and I were both innocent enough when we came

to the House. . . . It was the House that made us what we were and then turned on us and said, "Get out. You're not fit to be a member of this moral school. . . . Oh, the damned humbug of it all."

"At this moment a friend of Dick's sauntered up, and I realised with cowardly relief that confession would have to be postponed. Perhaps I could do it by letter.

"I walked back down the long road from Ypres, to 'Pop,' and as I walked, I turned the whole wretched story over again in my mind. I tried to comfort myself with the thought that I had been nothing but a small boy, easily hypnotised by my father's persuasive and almost mesmeric powers. I might plead guilty to Brown's fate, but surely I could acquit myself of the ruin of Dick. I had felt so confident that the last avenue for misadventure had been closed by that most unboyish foresight of insisting on a written pledge, and yet though these pleas might convince you, they did not convince me, and I felt, cheap, hideously cheap. I have done many things of which I ought to be ashamed, but these are not the things which trouble me. And as I strolled along past the shrapnel battered poplars I thought of the queer ironies of life, for surely it is passing strange that the one act which still fills me with shame should be a deed which my Housemaster could not praise too highly. 'We have done those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us.' But the general confession does not provide for cases like mine.

"I met Dick again in a communication trench behind the lines, not an ideal confessional. I met him again behind the lines, but he was with friends, and I felt grateful to those friends. I started half a dozen letters to him, but tore them all up. I could not put it down in black and white.

"And then came Loos. I lumbered over the top with my Company, and was shot within a few yards of the barbed wire. I lay for some hours, half unconscious, while the battle surged over me, and then came the kindly night and the stretcher bearers.

"They carried me to a dressing-station. I was not in great pain, and was only conscious of a placid joy in being still alive. The night before I had looked out at the jolly old stars, and wondered whether I should ever see them again. I was fed up with the noise and discomfort and the mud, and thankful to know that I was being taken away from all that unresting, stupid, meaningless tumult. It was luxury to close one's eyes, and to think of quiet things,—of some tranquil reach of the Thames, of the jolly ripples of water urged against the bank by the splash of a lazy oar. Peace, quiet, safety . . . I just longed for them. I lay there and just gurgled with pleasureable satisfaction at the prospect of quiet lanes and a sleepy old harvest moon coming up over fields unmarred by barbed wire, unsullied by shell holes. I don't think I was fully conscious. I had been hit in the head, and these day-dreams varied with moments in which depression surged over me, and blotted out the kindly visions of peace. And then I suddenly awoke to the fact that a bustling orderly was shifting my stretcher. I resented this, and feebly protested, for movement meant pain, but the dressing-station was filled to overflowing, and the orderly didn't give a damn for my protests. I glanced at the man they were laying down beside me . . . and then I wondered whether I was dreaming again.

" 'Is that Dick?' I murmured, weakly.

" 'Hallo,' said Dick, feebly.

" 'How goes it, old man?'

" 'Done in,' said Dick, 'good for half an hour.'

“ ‘Rot . . .’

“ ‘God’s truth, old man . . . never see England again. . . . look up my governor, when you get back . . . he’ll be braced to see you . . . he was always very decent to me . . . just thank him from me . . . oh God, the pain . . .’

“ ‘Something seemed to crack . . . a few minutes later I came back to life, like a man coming out of an anæsthetic. There was the same surging sensation, the same feeling of some problem which one’s tired brain was chasing without ever overtaking. What was it? What was it?’

“ ‘I say, Dick,’ I faltered, ‘about that business when you were sacked. . . .’

“ ‘Sacked,’ said Dick, vaguely, ‘oh yes . . . but that was long ago . . . old Brown . . . did his best . . . rotten business. . . . Don’t talk about it. . . .’

“ ‘Dick,’ I began desperately, ‘Dick, I . . . I . . .’

“ ‘And then things began to slide. I grasped at the roof of the dressing-station but it eluded my grip and swayed, and the air was full of the long-drawn whine of shells, and fat little Germans waltzed round the room, and then gradually my surroundings steadied down, and I heard a ‘Better put him outside. He’s dead, and we need every inch of room. . . .’

“ ‘And I knew that I had lost my last chance of winning forgiveness from the friend that I had betrayed.’”

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

PICTURES

EIGHT o'clock in the morning. Miss Ada Moss lay in a black iron bedstead, staring up at the ceiling. Her room, a Bloomsbury top-floor back, smelled of soot and face powder and the paper of fried potatoes she brought in for supper the night before.

"Oh, dear," thought Miss Moss, "I am cold. I wonder why it is that I always wake up so cold in the mornings now. My knees and feet and my back—especially my back; it's like a sheet of ice. And I always was such a one for being warm in the old days. It's not as if I was skinny—I'm just the same full figure that I used to be. No, it's because I don't have a good hot dinner in the evenings."

A pageant of Good Hot Dinners passed across the ceiling, each of them accompanied by a bottle of Nourishing Stout. . . .

"Even if I were to get up now," she thought, "and have a sensible substantial breakfast. . . ." A pageant of Sensible Substantial Breakfasts followed the dinners across the ceiling, shepherded by an enormous, white, uncut ham. Miss Moss shuddered and disappeared under the bedclothes. Suddenly, in bounced the landlady.

"There's a letter for you, Miss Moss."

"Oh," said Miss Moss, far too friendly, "thank you



KATHERINE MANSFIELD

very much, Mrs. Pine. It's very good of you, I'm sure, to take the trouble."

"No trouble at all," said the landlady. "I thought perhaps it was the letter you'd been expecting."

"Why," said Miss Moss brightly, "yes, perhaps it is." She put her head on one side and smiled vaguely at the letter. "I shouldn't be surprised."

The landlady's eyes popped. "Well, I should, Miss Moss," said she, "and that's how it is. And I'll trouble you to open it, if you please. Many is the lady in my place as would have done it for you and have been within her rights. For things can't go on like this, Miss Moss, no indeed they can't. What with week in week out and first you've got it and then you haven't, and then it's another letter lost in the post or another manager down at Brighton but will be back on Tuesday for certain—I'm fair sick and tired and I won't stand it no more. Why should I, Miss Moss, I ask you, at a time like this, with prices flying up in the air and my poor dear lad in France? My sister Eliza was only saying to me yesterday—'Minnie,' she says, 'you're too soft-hearted. You could have let that room time and time again,' says she, 'and if people won't look after themselves in times like these, nobody else will,' she says. 'She may have had a College eddication and sung in West End concerts,' says she, 'but if your Lizzie says what's true,' she says, 'and she's washing her own wovens and drying them on the towel rail, it's easy to see where the finger's pointing. And it's high time you had done with it,' says she."

Miss Moss gave no sign of having heard this. She sat up in bed, tore open her letter, and read:

"DEAR MADAM,—Yours to hand. Am not producing at present, but have filed photo for future ref. Yours truly,
"BACKWASH FILM CO."

This letter seemed to afford her peculiar satisfaction; she read it through twice before replying to the landlady.

"Well, Mrs. Pine, I think you'll be sorry for what you said. This is from a manager, asking me to be there with evening dress at ten o'clock next Saturday morning."

But the landlady was too quick for her. She pounced, secured the letter.

"Oh, is it! Is it indeed!" she cried.

"Give me back that letter. Give it back to me at once, you bad, wicked woman," cried Miss Moss, who could not get out of bed because her nightdress was slit down the back. "Give me back my private letter." The landlady began slowly backing out of the room holding the letter to her buttoned bodice.

"So it's come to this, has it?" said she. "Well, Miss Moss, if I don't get my rent at eight o'clock to-night, we'll see who's a bad, wicked woman—that's all." Here she nodded, mysteriously. "And I'll keep this letter." Here her voice rose. "It will be a pretty little bit of evidence!" And here it fell, sepulchral, "*My lady.*"

The door banged and Miss Moss was alone. She flung off the bed clothes, and sitting by the side of the bed, furious and shivering, she stared at her fat white legs with their great knots of greeny-blue veins.

"Cockroach! That's what she is. She's a cockroach!" said Miss Moss. "I could have her up for snatching my letter—I'm sure I could." Still keeping on her nightdress she began to drag on her clothes.

"Oh, if I could only pay that woman, I'd give her a piece of my mind that she wouldn't forget. I'd tell her off proper." She went over to the chest of drawers for a safety-pin, and seeing herself in the glass she gave a vague smile and shook her head. "Well, old girl," she murmured, "you're up against it this time, and no mis-

take." But the person in the glass made an ugly face at her.

"You silly thing," scolded Miss Moss. "Now what's the good of crying: you'll only make your nose red. No, you get dressed and go out and try your luck—that's what you've got to do."

She unhooked her vanity bag from the bedpost, rooted in it, shook it, turned it inside out.

"I'll have a nice cup of tea at an A B C to settle me before I go anywhere," she decided. "I've got one and thruppence—yes, just one and three."

Ten minutes later, a stout lady in blue serge, with a bunch of artificial "parmas" at her bosom, a black hat covered with purple pansies, white gloves, boots with white uppers, and a vanity bag containing one and three, sang in a low contralto voice:

"Sweetheart, remember when days are forlorn
It al-ways is dar-kest before the dawn."

But the person in the glass made a face at her, and Miss Moss went out. There were grey crabs all the way down the street slopping water over grey stone steps. With his strange, hawking cry and the jangle of the cans the milk boy went his rounds. Outside Brittweiler's Swiss House he made a splash, and an old brown cat without a tail appeared from nowhere, and began greedily and silently drinking up the spill. It gave Miss Moss a queer feeling to watch—a sinking—as you might say.

But when she came to the A B C she found the door propped open; a man went in and out carrying trays of rolls, and there was nobody inside except a waitress doing her hair and the cashier unlocking the cash-boxes. She stood in the middle of the floor but neither of them saw her.

"My boy came home last night," sang the waitress.

"Oh, I say—how topping for you!" gurgled the cashier.

"Yes, wasn't it?" sang the waitress. "He brought me a sweet little brooch. Look, it's got 'Dieppe' written on it."

The cashier ran across to look and put her arm round the waitress's neck.

"Oh, I say—how topping for you."

"Yes, isn't it?" said the waitress. "O-oh, he is brahn. 'Hullo,' I said, 'hullo, old mahogany.'"

"Oh, I say," gurgled the cashier, running back into her cage and nearly bumping into Miss Moss on the way. "You are a *treat!*" Then the man with the rolls came in again, swerving past her.

"Can I have a cup of tea, Miss?" she asked.

But the waitress went on doing her hair. "Oh," she sang, "we're not *open* yet." She turned round and waved her comb at the cashier.

"*Are* we, dear?"

"Oh, no," said the cashier. Miss Moss went out.

"I'll go to Charing Cross. Yes that's what I'll do," she decided. "But I won't have a cup of tea. No, I'll have a coffee. There's more of a tonic in coffee. . . . Cheeky, those girls are! Her boy came home last night; he brought her a brooch with 'Dieppe' written on it." She began to cross the road. . . .

"Look out, Fattie; don't go to sleep!" yelled a taxi driver. She pretended not to hear.

"No, I won't go to Charing Cross," she decided. "I'll go straight to Kig and Kadgit. They're open at nine. If I get there early Mr. Kadgit may have something by the morning's post. . . . I'm very glad you turned up so early, Miss Moss. I've just heard from a manager who wants

a lady to play. . . . I think you'll just suit him. I'll give you a card to go and see him. It's three pounds a week and all found. If I were you I'd hop round as fast as I could. Lucky you turned up so early. . . ."

But there was nobody at Kig and Kadgit's except the charwoman wiping over the "lino" in the passage.

"Nobody here yet, Miss," said the char.

"Oh, isn't Mr. Kadgit here?" said Miss Moss, trying to dodge the pail and brush. "Well, I'll just wait a moment, if I may."

"You can't wait in the waiting-room, Miss. I 'aven't done it yet. Mr. Kadgit's never 'ere before 'leven-thirty Saturdays. Sometimes 'e don't come at all." And the char began crawling towards her.

"Dear me—how silly of me," said Miss Moss. "I forgot it was Saturday."

"Mind your feet, *please*, Miss," said the char. And Miss Moss was outside again.

That was one thing about Beit and Bithems; it was lively. You walked into the waiting-room, into a great buzz of conversation, and there was everybody; you knew almost everybody. The early ones sat on chairs and the later ones sat on the early one's laps, while the gentlemen leaned negligently against the walls or preened themselves in front of the admiring ladies.

"Hello," said Miss Moss, very gay. "Here we are again!"

And young Mr. Clayton, playing the banjo on his walking-stick, sang: "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee."

"Mr. Bithem here yet?" asked Miss Moss, taking out an old dead powder puff and powdering her nose mauve.

"Oh, yes, dear," cried the chorus. "He's been here for ages. We've all been waiting here for more than an hour."

"Dear me!" said Miss Moss. "Anything doing, do you think?"

"Oh, a few jobs going for South Africa," said young Mr. Clayton. "Hundred and fifty a week for two years, you know."

"Oh!" cried the chorus. "You *are* weird, Mr. Clayton. Isn't he a *cure*? Isn't he a *scream*, dear? Oh, Mr. Clayton, you do make me laugh. Isn't he a *comic*?"

A dark, mournful girl touched Miss Moss on the arm.

"I just missed a lovely job yesterday," she said. "Six weeks in the provinces and then the West End. The manager said I would have got it for certain if only I'd been robust enough. He said if my figure had been fuller, the part was made for me." She stared at Miss Moss, and the dirty dark red rose under the brim of her hat looked, somehow, as though it shared the blow with her, and was crushed, too.

"Oh, dear, that was hard lines," said Miss Moss trying to appear indifferent. "What was it—if I may ask?"

But the dark, mournful girl saw through her and a gleam of spite came into her heavy eyes.

"Oh, no good to you, my dear," said she. "He wanted someone young, you know—a dark Spanish type—my style, but more figure, that was all."

The inner door opened and Mr. Bithem appeared in his shirt sleeves. He kept one hand on the door ready to whisk back again, and held up the other.

"Look here, ladies—" and then he paused, grinned his famous grin before he said—"and *bhoys*." The waiting-room laughed so loudly at this that he had to hold both hands up. "It's no good waiting this morning. Come back Monday; I'm expecting several calls on Monday."

Miss Moss made a desperate rush forward. "Mr. Bithem, I wonder if you've heard from . . ."

"Now let me see," said Mr. Bithem slowly, staring; he had only seen Miss Moss four times a week for the past—how many weeks? "Now, who are you?"

"Miss Ada Moss."

"Oh, yes, yes; of course, my dear. Not yet, my dear. Now I had a call for twenty-eight ladies to-day, but they had to be young and able to hop it a bit—see? And I had another call for sixteen—but they had to know something about sand-dancing. Look here, my dear, I'm up to the eyebrows this morning. Come back on Monday week; it's no good coming before that." He gave her a whole grin to herself and patted her fat back. "Hearts of oak, dear lady," said Mr. Bithem, "hearts of oak!"

At the North-East Film Company the crowd was all the way up the stairs. Miss Moss found herself next to a fair little baby thing about thirty in a white lace hat with cherries round it.

"What a crowd!" said she. "Anything special on?"

"*Didn't* you know, dear?" said the baby, opening her immense pale eyes. "There was a call at nine-thirty for *attractive* girls. We've all been waiting for *hours*. Have you played for this company before?" Miss Moss put her head on one side. "No, I don't think I have."

"They're a lovely company to play for," said the baby. "A friend of mine has a friend who gets thirty pounds a day. . . . Have you *arcted* much for the *fil-lums*?"

"Well, I'm not an actress by profession," confessed Miss Moss. "I'm a contralto singer. But things have been so bad lately that I've been doing a little."

"It's *like* that, isn't it, dear?" said the baby.

"I had a splendid education at the College of Music," said Miss Moss, "and I got my silver medal for singing.

I've often sung at West End concerts. But I thought, for a change, I'd try my luck. . . ."

"Yes, it's *like* that, isn't it, dear?" said the baby.

At that moment a beautiful typist appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Are you all waiting for the North-East call?"

"Yes," cried the chorus.

"Well, it's off. I've just had a phone through."

"But look here! What about our expenses?" shouted a voice.

The typist looked down at them, and she couldn't help laughing.

"Oh, you weren't to have been *paid*. The North-East never *pay* their crowds."

There was only a little round window at the Bitter Orange Company. No waiting-room—nobody at all except a girl, who came to the window when Miss Moss knocked, and said: "Well?"

"Can I see the producer, please?" said Miss Moss pleasantly. The girl leaned on the window-bar, half shut her eyes and seemed to go to sleep for a moment. Miss Moss smiled at her. The girl not only frowned; she seemed to smell something vaguely unpleasant; she sniffed. Suddenly she moved away, came back with a paper and thrust it at Miss Moss.

"Fill up the form!" said she. And banged the window down.

"Can you aviate—high-dive—drive a car—buck-jump—shoot?" read Miss Moss. She walked along the street asking herself those questions. There was a high, cold wind blowing; it tugged at her, slapped her face, jeered; it knew she could not answer them. In the Square Gardens she found a little wire basket to drop the form into. And then she sat down on one of the benches to powder

her nose. But the person in the pocket mirror made a hideous face at her, and that was too much for Miss Moss; she had a good cry. It cheered her wonderfully.

"Well, that's over," she sighed. "It's one comfort to be off my feet. And my nose will soon get cool in the air. . . . It's very nice in here. Look at the sparrows. Cheep. Cheep. How close they come. I expect somebody feeds them. No, I've nothing for you, you cheeky little things. . . ." She looked away from them. What was the big building opposite—the Café de Madrid? My goodness, what a smack that little child came down! Poor little mite! Never mind—up again. . . . By eight o'clock to-night . . . Café de Madrid. "I could just go in and sit there and have a coffee, that's all," thought Miss Moss. "It's such a place for artists, too. I might just have a stroke of luck. . . . A dark handsome gentleman in a fur coat comes in with a friend, and sits at my table, perhaps. 'No, old chap, I've searched London for a contralto and I can't find a soul. You see, the music is difficult; have a look at it.' " And Miss Moss heard herself saying: "Excuse me, I happen to be a contralto, and I have sung that part many times . . . Extraordinary! 'Come back to my studio and I'll try your voice now.' . . . Ten pounds a week. . . . Why should I feel nervous? It's not nervousness. Why shouldn't I go to the Café de Madrid? I'm a respectable woman—I'm a contralto singer. And I'm only trembling because I've had nothing to eat to-day. . . . A nice little piece of evidence, *my lady*.' . . . Very well, Mrs. Pine. Café de Madrid. They have concerts there in the evenings. . . . 'Why don't they begin?' The contralto has not arrived. . . . 'Excuse me, I happen to be a contralto; I have sung that music many times.'

It was almost dark in the café. Men, palms, red plush

seats, white marble tables, waiters in aprons, Miss Moss walked through them all. Hardly had she sat down when a very stout gentleman wearing a very small hat that floated on the top of his head like a little yacht flopped into the chair opposite hers.

"Good evening!" said he.

Miss Moss said, in her cheerful way: "Good evening!"

"Fine evening," said the stout gentleman.

"Yes, very fine. Quite a treat, isn't it?" said she.

He crooked a sausage finger at the waiter—"Bring me a large whisky"—and turned to Miss Moss. "What's yours?"

"Well, I think I'll take a brandy if it's all the same."

Five minutes later the stout gentleman leaned across the table and blew a puff of cigar smoke in her face.

"That's a tempting bit o' ribbon!" said he.

Miss Moss blushed until a pulse at the top of her head that she never had felt before pounded away.

"I always was one for pink," said she.

The stout gentleman considered her, drumming with her fingers on the table.

"I like 'em firm and well covered," said he.

Miss Moss, to her surprise, gave a loud snigger.

Five minutes later the stout gentleman heaved himself up. "Well, am I goin' your way, or are you comin' mine?" he asked.

"I'll come with you, if it's all the same," said Miss Moss. And she sailed after the little yacht out of the café.



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W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

RAIN

It was nearly bed-time and when they awoke next morning land would be in sight. Dr. Macphail lit his pipe and, leaning over the rail, searched the heavens for the Southern Cross. After two years at the front and a wound that had taken longer to heal than it should, he was glad to settle down quietly at Apia for twelve months at least, and he felt already better for the journey. Since some of the passengers were leaving the ship next day at Pago-Pago they had had a little dance that evening and in his ears hammered still the harsh notes of the mechanical piano. But the deck was quiet at last. A little way off he saw his wife in a long chair talking with the Davidsons, and he strolled over to her. When he sat down under the light and took off his hat you saw that he had very red hair, with a bald patch on the crown, and the red, freckled skin which accompanies red hair; he was a man of forty, thin, with a pinched face, precise and rather pedantic; and he spoke with a Scotch accent in a very low, quiet voice.

Between the Macphails and the Davidsons, who were missionaries, there had arisen the intimacy of shipboard, which is due to propinquity rather than to any community of taste. Their chief tie was the disapproval they shared of the men who spent their days and nights in the smok-

ing-room playing poker or bridge and drinking. Mrs. Macphail was not a little flattered to think that she and her husband were the only people on board with whom the Davidsons were willing to associate, and even the doctor, shy but no fool, half unconsciously acknowledged the compliment. It was only because he was of an argumentative mind that in their cabin at night he permitted himself to carp.

"Mrs. Davidson was saying she didn't know how they'd have got through the journey if it hadn't been for us," said Mrs. Macphail, as she neatly brushed out her transformation. "She said we were really the only people on the ship they cared to know."

"I shouldn't have thought a missionary was such a big bug that he could afford to put on frills."

"It's not frills. I quite understand what she means. It wouldn't have been very nice for the Davidsons to have to mix with all that rough lot in the smoking-room."

"The founder of their religion wasn't so exclusive," said Dr. Macphail with a chuckle.

"I've asked you over and over again not to joke about religion," answered his wife. "I shouldn't like to have a nature like yours, Alec. You never look for the best in people."

He gave her a sidelong glance with his pale blue eyes, but did not reply. After many years of married life he had learned that it was conducive to peace to leave his wife with the last word. He was undressed before she was, and climbing into the upper bunk he settled down to read himself to sleep.

When he came on deck next morning they were close to land. He looked at it with greedy eyes. There was a thin strip of silver beach rising quickly to hills covered to the top with luxuriant vegetation. The coconut trees,

thick and green, came nearly to the water's edge, and among them you saw the grass houses of the Samoans; and here and there, gleaming white, a little church. Mrs. Davidson came and stood beside him. She was dressed in black and wore round her neck a gold chain, from which dangled a small cross. She was a little woman, with brown, dull hair very elaborately arranged, and she had prominent blue eyes behind invisible *pince-nez*. Her face was long, like a sheep's, but she gave no impression of foolishness, rather of extreme alertness; she had the quick movements of a bird. The most remarkable thing about her was her voice, high, metallic, and without inflection; it fell on the ear with a hard monotony, irritating to the nerves like the pitiless clamour of the pneumatic drill.

"This must seem like home to you," said Dr. Macphail, with his thin, difficult smile.

"Ours are low islands, you know, not like these. Coral. These are volcanic. We've got another ten days' journey to reach them."

"In these parts that's almost like being in the next street at home," said Dr. Macphail facetiously.

"Well, that's rather an exaggerated way of putting it, but one does look at distances differently in the South Seas. So far you're right."

Dr. Macphail sighed faintly.

"I'm glad we're not stationed here," she went on. "They say this is a terribly difficult place to work in. The steamers' touching makes the people unsettled; and then there's the naval station; that's bad for the natives. In our district we don't have difficulties like that to contend with. There are one or two traders, of course, but we take care to make them behave, and if they don't we make the place so hot for them they're glad to go."

Fixing the glasses on her nose she looked at the green island with a ruthless stare.

"It's almost a hopeless task for the missionaries here. I can never be sufficiently thankful to God that we are at least spared that."

Davidson's district consisted of a group of islands to the North of Samoa; they were widely separated and he had frequently to go long distances by canoe. At these times his wife remained at their headquarters and managed the mission. Dr. Macphail felt his heart sink when he considered the efficiency with which she certainly managed it. She spoke of the depravity of the natives in a voice which nothing could hush, but with a vehemently unctuous horror. Her sense of delicacy was singular. Early in their acquaintance she had said to him:

"You know, their marriage customs when we first settled in the islands were so shocking that I couldn't possibly describe them to you. But I'll tell Mrs. Macphail and she'll tell you."

Then he had seen his wife and Mrs. Davidson, their deck-chairs close together, in earnest conversation. As he walked past them backwards and forwards for the sake of exercise, he had heard Mrs. Davidson's agitated whisper, like the distant flow of a mountain torrent, and he saw by his wife's open mouth and pale face that she was enjoying an alarming experience. At night in their cabin she repeated to him with bated breath all she had heard.

"Well, what did I say to you?" cried Mrs. Davidson, exultant, next morning. "Did you ever hear anything more dreadful? You don't wonder that I couldn't tell you myself, do you? Even though you are a doctor."

Mrs. Davidson scanned his face. She had a dramatic eagerness to see that she had achieved the desired effect.

"Can you wonder that when we first went there our hearts sank? You'll hardly believe me when I tell you it was impossible to find a single good girl in any of the villages."

She used the word *good* in a severely technical manner.

"Mr. Davidson and I talked it over, and we made up our minds the first thing to do was to put down the dancing. The natives were crazy about dancing."

"I was not averse to it myself when I was a young man," said Dr. Macphail.

"I guessed as much when I heard you ask Mrs. Macphail to have a turn with you last night. I don't think there's any real harm if a man dances with his wife, but I was relieved that she wouldn't. Under the circumstances I thought it better that we should keep ourselves to ourselves."

"Under what circumstances?"

Mrs. Davidson gave him a quick look through her *pince-nez*, but did not answer his question.

"But among white people it's not quite the same," she went on, "though I must say I agree with Mr. Davidson, who says he can't understand how a husband can stand by and see his wife in another man's arms, and as far as I'm concerned I've never danced a step since I married. But the native dancing is quite another matter. It's not only immoral in itself, but it distinctly leads to immorality. However, I'm thankful to God that we stamped it out, and I don't think I'm wrong in saying that no one has danced in our district for eight years."

But now they came to the mouth of the harbour and Mrs. Macphail joined them. The ship turned sharply and steamed slowly in. It was a great land-locked harbour big enough to hold a fleet of battleships; and all round it rose, high and steep, the green hills. Near the entrance,

getting such breeze as blew from the sea, stood the governor's house in a garden. The Stars and Stripes dangled languidly from a flagstaff. They passed two or three trim bungalows, and a tennis court, and then they came to the quay with its warehouses. Mrs. Davidson pointed out the schooner, moored two or three hundred yards from the side, which was to take them to Apia. There was a crowd of eager, noisy, and good-humoured natives come from all parts of the island, some from curiosity, others to barter with the travellers on their way to Sydney; and they brought pineapples and huge bunches of bananas, tapa cloths, necklaces of shells or sharks' teeth, kava-bowls, and models of war canoes. American sailors, neat and trim, clean-shaven and frank of face, sauntered among them, and there was a little group of officials. While their luggage was being landed the Macphails and Mrs. Davidson watched the crowd. Men and women wore the lava-lava.

"It's a very indecent costume," said Mrs. Davidson. "Mr. Davidson thinks it should be prohibited by law. How can you expect people to be moral when they wear nothing but a strip of red cotton round their loins?"

"It's suitable enough to the climate," said the doctor, wiping the sweat off his head.

Now that they were on land the heat, though it was so early in the morning, was already oppressive. Closed in by its hills, not a breath of air came in to Pago-Pago.

"In our islands," Mrs. Davidson went on in her high-pitched tones, "we've practically eradicated the lava-lava. A few old men still continue to wear it, but that's all. The women have all taken to the Mother Hubbard, and the men wear pants and singlets. At the very beginning of our stay Mr. Davidson said in one of his reports: the inhabitants of these islands will never be thoroughly Chris-

tianised till every boy of more than ten years is made to wear a pair of trousers."

But Mrs. Davidson had given two or three of her bird-like glances at heavy grey clouds that came floating over the mouth of the harbour. A few drops fell.

"We'd better take shelter," she said.

They made their way with all the crowd to a great shed of corrugated iron, and the rain began to fall in torrents. They stood there for some time and then were joined by Mr. Davidson. He had been polite enough to the Macphails during the journey, but he had not his wife's sociability, and had spent much of his time reading. He was a silent, rather sullen man, and you felt that his affability was a duty that he imposed upon himself Christianly; he was by nature reserved and even morose. His appearance was singular. He was very tall and thin, with long limbs loosely jointed; hollow cheeks and curiously high cheek-bones; he had so cadaverous an air that it surprised you to notice how full and sensual were his lips. He wore his hair long. His dark eyes, set deep in their sockets, were large and tragic; and his hands with their big, long fingers, were finely shaped; they gave him a look of great strength. But the most striking thing about him was the feeling he gave you of suppressed fire. It was impressive and vaguely troubling. He was not a man with whom any intimacy was possible.

He brought now unwelcome news. There was an epidemic of measles, a serious and often fatal disease among the Kanakas, on the island, and a case had developed among the crew of the schooner which was to take them on their journey. The sick man had been brought ashore and put in hospital at the quarantine station, but telegraphic instructions had been sent from Apia to say that the schooner would not be allowed to enter the har-

hour till it was certain no other member of the crew was affected.

"It means we shall have to stay here for ten days at least."

"But I'm urgently needed at Apia," said Dr. Macphail.

"That can't be helped. If no more cases develop on board, the schooner will be allowed to sail with white passengers, but all native traffic is prohibited for three months."

"Is there an hotel here?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

Davidson gave a low chuckle.

"There's not."

"What shall we do then?"

"I've been talking to the governor. There's a trader along the front who has rooms that he rents, and my proposition is that as soon as the rain lets up we should go along there and see what we can do. Don't expect comfort. You've just got to be thankful if we get a bed to sleep on and a roof over our heads."

But the rain showed no sign of stopping, and at length with umbrellas and waterproofs they set out. There was no town, but merely a group of official buildings, a store or two, and at the back, among the coconut trees and plantains, a few native dwellings. The house they sought was about five minutes' walk from the wharf. It was a frame house of two storeys, with broad verandahs on both floors and a roof of corrugated iron. The owner was a half-caste named Horn, with a native wife surrounded by little brown children, and on the ground-floor he had a store where he sold canned goods and cottons. The rooms he showed them were almost bare of furniture. In the Macphails' there was nothing but a poor, worn bed with a ragged mosquito net, a rickety chair, and a washstand. They looked round with dismay. The rain poured down without ceasing.

"I'm not going to unpack more than we actually need," said Mrs. Macphail.

Mrs. Davidson came into the room as she was unlocking a portmanteau. She was very brisk and alert. The cheerless surroundings had no effect on her.

"If you'll take my advice you'll get a needle and cotton and start right in to mend the mosquito net," she said, "or you'll not be able to get a wink of sleep to-night."

"Will they be very bad?" asked Dr. Macphail.

"This is the season for them. When you're asked to a party at Government House at Apia you'll notice that all the ladies are given a pillow-slip to put their—their lower extremities in."

"I wish the rain would stop for a moment," said Mrs. Macphail. "I could try to make the place comfortable with more heart if the sun were shining."

"Oh, if you wait for that, you'll wait a long time. Pago-Pago is about the rainiest place in the Pacific. You see, the hills, and that bay, they attract the water, and one expects rain at this time of year anyway."

She looked from Macphail to his wife, standing helplessly in different parts of the room, like lost souls, and she pursed her lips. She saw that she must take them in hand. Feckless people like that made her impatient, but her hands itched to put everything in the order which came so naturally to her.

"Here, you give me a needle and cotton and I'll mend that net of yours, while you go on with your unpacking. Dinner's at once. Dr. Macphail, you'd better go down to the wharf and see that your heavy luggage has been put in a dry place. You know what these natives are, they're quite capable of storing it where the rain will beat in on it all the time."

The doctor put on his waterproof again and went

downstairs. At the door Mr. Horn was standing in conversation with the quartermaster of the ship they had just arrived in and a second-class passenger whom Dr. Macphail had seen several times on board. The quartermaster, a little, shrivelled man, extremely dirty, nodded to him as he passed.

"This is a bad job about the measles, Doc," he said. "I see you've fixed yourself up already."

Dr. Macphail thought he was rather familiar, but he was a timid man and he did not take offence easily.

"Yes, we've got a room upstairs."

"Miss Thompson was sailing with you to Apia, so I've brought her along here."

The quartermaster pointed with his thumb to the woman standing by his side. She was twenty-seven perhaps, plump, and in a coarse fashion pretty. She wore a white dress and a large white hat. Her fat calves in white cotton stockings bulged over the tops of long white boots in glacé kid. She gave Macphail an ingratiating smile.

"The feller's trying to soak me a dollar and a half a day for the meanest sized room," she said in a coarse voice.

"I tell you she's a friend of mine, Jo," said the quartermaster. "She can't pay more than a dollar, and you've sure got to take her for that."

The trader was fat and smooth and quietly smiling.

"Well, if you put it like that, Mr. Swan, I'll see what I can do about it. I'll talk to Mrs. Horn and if we think we can made a reduction we will."

"Don't try to pull that stuff with me," said Miss Thompson. "We'll settle this right now. You get a dollar a day for the room and not one bean more."

Dr. Macphail smiled. He admired the effrontery with which she bargained. He was the sort of man who al-

ways paid what he was asked. He preferred to be overcharged than to haggle. The trader sighed.

"Well, to oblige Mr. Swan I'll take it."

"That's the goods," said Miss Thompson. "Come right in and have a shot of hooch. I've got some real good rye in that grip if you'll bring it along, Mr. Swan. You come along too, Doctor."

"Oh, I don't think I will, thank you," he answered. "I'm just going down to see that our luggage is all right."

He stepped out into the rain. It swept in from the opening of the harbour in sheets and the opposite shore was all blurred. He passed two or three natives clad in nothing but the lava-lava, with huge umbrellas over them. They walked finely, with leisurely movements, very upright; and they smiled and greeted him in a strange tongue as they went by.

It was nearly dinner-time when he got back, and their meal was laid in the trader's parlour. It was a room designed not to live in but for purposes of prestige, and it had a musty, melancholy air. A suite of stamped plush was arranged neatly round the walls, and from the middle of the ceiling, protected from the flies by yellow tissue paper, hung a gilt chandelier. Davidson did not come.

"I know he went to call on the governor," said Mrs. Davidson, "and I guess he's kept him to dinner."

A little native girl brought them a dish of Hamburger steak, and after a while the trader came up to see that they had everything they wanted.

"I see we have a fellow lodger, Mr. Horn," said Dr. Macphail.

"She's taken a room, that's all," answered the trader. "She's getting her own board."

He looked at the two ladies with an obsequious air.

"I put her downstairs so she shouldn't be in the way. She won't be any trouble to you."

"Is it someone who was on the boat?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"Yes, ma'am, she was in the second cabin. She was going to Apia. She has a position as cashier waiting for her."

"Oh!"

When the trader was gone Macphail said:

"I shouldn't think she'd find it exactly cheerful having her meals in her room."

"If she was in the second cabin I guess she'd rather," answered Mrs. Davidson. "I don't exactly know who it can be."

"I happened to be there when the quartermaster brought her along. Her name's Thompson."

"It's not the woman who was dancing with the quartermaster last night?" asked Mrs. Davidson.

"That's who it must be," said Mrs. Macphail. "I wondered at the time what she was. She looked rather fast to me."

"Not good style at all," said Mrs. Davidson.

They began to talk of other things, and after dinner, tired with their early rise, they separated and slept. When they awoke, though the sky was still grey and the clouds hung low, it was not raining and they went for a walk on the high road which the Americans had built along the bay.

On their return they found that Davidson had just come in.

"We may be here for a fortnight," he said irritably. "I've argued it out with the governor, but he says there is nothing to be done."

"Mr. Davidson's just longing to get back to his work," said his wife, with an anxious glance at him.

"We've been away for a year," he said, walking up and down the verandah. "The mission has been in charge of native missionaries and I'm terribly nervous that they've let things slide. They're good men, I'm not saying a word against them, God-fearing, devout, and truly Christian men—their Christianity would put many so-called Christians at home to the blush—but they're pitifully lacking in energy. They can make a stand once, they can make a stand twice, but they can't make a stand all the time. If you leave a mission in charge of a native missionary, no matter how trustworthy he seems, in course of time you'll find he's let abuses creep in."

Mr. Davidson stood still. With his tall spare form, and his great eyes flashing out of his pale face, he was an impressive figure. His sincerity was obvious in the fire of his gestures and in his deep, ringing voice.

"I expect to have my work cut out for me. I shall act and I shall act promptly. If the tree is rotten it shall be cut down and cast into the flames."

And in the evening after the high tea which was their last meal, while they sat in the stiff parlour, the ladies working and Dr. Macphail smoking his pipe, the missionary told them of his work in the islands.

"When we went there they had no sense of sin at all," he said. "They broke the commandments one after the other and never knew they were doing wrong. And I think that was the most difficult part of my work, to instil into the natives the sense of sin."

The Macphails knew already that Davidson had worked in the Solomons for five years before he met his wife. She had been a missionary in China, and they had become acquainted in Boston, where they were both

spending part of their leave to attend a missionary congress. On their marriage they had been appointed to the islands in which they had laboured ever since.

In the course of all the conversations they had had with Mr. Davidson one thing had shone out clearly and that was his unflinching courage. He was a medical missionary, and he was liable to be called at any time to one or other of the islands in the group. Even the whaleboat is not so very safe a conveyance in the stormy Pacific of the wet season, but often he would be sent for in a canoe, and then the danger was great. In cases of illness or accident he never hesitated. A dozen times he had spent the whole night baling for his life, and more than once Mrs. Davidson had given him up for lost.

"I'd beg him not to go sometimes," she said, "or at least to wait till the weather was more settled, but he'd never listen. He's obstinate, and when he's once made up his mind, nothing can move him."

"How can I ask the natives to put their trust in the Lord if I am afraid to do so myself?" cried Davidson. "And I'm not, I'm not. They know that if they send for me in their trouble I'll come if it's humanly possible. And do you think the Lord is going to abandon me when I am on his business? The wind blows at his bidding and the waves toss and rage at his word."

Dr. Macphail was a timid man. He had never been able to get used to the hurtling of the shells over the trenches and when he was operating in an advanced dressing-station the sweat poured from his brow and dimmed his spectacles in the effort he made to control his unsteady hand. He shuddered a little as he looked at the missionary.

"I wish I could say that I've never been afraid," he said.

"I wish you could say that you believed in God," retorted the other.

But for some reason, that evening the missionary's thoughts travelled back to the early days he and his wife had spent on the islands.

"Sometimes Mrs. Davidson and I would look at one another and the tears would stream down our cheeks. We worked without ceasing, day and night, and we seemed to make no progress. I don't know what I should have done without her then. When I felt my heart sink, when I was very near despair, she gave me courage and hope."

Mrs. Davidson looked down at her work, and a slight colour rose to her thin cheeks. Her hands trembled a little. She did not trust herself to speak.

"We had no one to help us. We were alone, thousands of miles from any of our own people, surrounded by darkness. When I was broken and weary she would put her work aside and take the Bible and read to me till peace came and settled upon me like sleep upon the eyelids of a child, and when at last she closed the book she'd say: 'We'll save them in spite of themselves.' And I felt strong again in the Lord, and I answered: 'Yes, with God's help I'll save them. I must save them.'"

He came over to the table and stood in front of it as though it were a lectern.

"You see, they were so naturally depraved that they couldn't be brought to see their wickedness. We had to make sins out of what they thought were natural actions. We had to make it a sin, not only to commit adultery and to lie and thief, but to expose their bodies, and to dance and not to come to church. I made it a sin for a girl to show her bosom and a sin for a man not to wear pants."

"How?" asked Dr Macphail, not without surprise.

"I instituted fines. Obviously the only way to make people realise that an action is sinful is to punish them if they commit it. I fined them if they didn't come to church, and I fined them if they danced. I fined them if they were improperly dressed. I had a tariff, and every sin had to be paid for either in money or work. And at last I made them understand."

"But did they never refuse to pay?"

"How could they?" asked the missionary.

"It would be a brave man who tried to stand up against Mr. Davidson," said his wife, tightening her lips.

Dr. Macphail looked at Davidson with troubled eyes. What he heard shocked him, but he hesitated to express his disapproval.

"You must remember that in the last resort I could expel them from their church membership."

"Did they mind that?"

Davidson smiled a little and gently rubbed his hands.

"They couldn't sell their copra. When the men fished they got no share of the catch. It meant something very like starvation. Yes, they minded quite a lot."

"Tell him about Fred Ohlson," said Mrs. Davidson.

The missionary fixed his fiery eyes on Dr. Macphail.

"Fred Ohlson was a Danish trader who had been in the islands a good many years. He was a pretty rich man as traders go and he wasn't very pleased when we came. You see, he'd had things very much his own way. He paid the natives what he liked for their copra, and he paid in goods and whisky. He had a native wife, but he was flagrantly unfaithful to her. He was a drunkard. I gave him a chance to mend his ways, but he wouldn't take it. He laughed at me."

Davidson's voice fell to a deep bass as he said the

last words, and he was silent for a minute or two. The silence was heavy with menace.

"In two years he was a ruined man. He'd lost everything he'd saved in a quarter of a century. I broke him, and at last he was forced to come to me like a beggar and beseech me to give him a passage back to Sydney."

"I wish you could have seen him when he came to see Mr. Davidson," said the missionary's wife. "He had been a fine, powerful man, with a lot of fat on him, and he had a great big voice, but now he was half the size, and he was shaking all over. He'd suddenly become an old man."

With abstracted gaze Davidson looked out into the night. The rain was falling again.

Suddenly from below came a sound, and Davidson turned and looked questioningly at his wife. It was the sound of a gramophone, harsh and loud, wheezing out a syncopated tune.

"What's that?" he asked.

Mrs. Davidson fixed her *pince-nez* more firmly on her nose.

"One of the second-class passengers has a room in the house. I guess it comes from there."

They listened in silence, and presently they heard the sound of dancing. Then the music stopped, and they heard the popping of corks and voices raised in animated conversation.

"I dare say she's giving a farewell party to her friends on board," said Dr. Macphail. "The ship sails at twelve, doesn't it?"

Davidson made no remark, but he looked at his watch.

"Are you ready?" he asked his wife.

She got up and folded her work.

"Yes, I guess I am," she answered.

"It's early to go to bed yet, isn't it?" said the doctor.

"We have a good deal of reading to do," explained Mrs. Davidson. "Wherever we are, we read a chapter of the Bible before retiring for the night and we study it with the commentaries, you know, and discuss it thoroughly. It's a wonderful training for the mind."

The two couples bade one another good night. Dr. and Mrs. Macphail were left alone. For two or three minutes they did not speak.

"I think I'll go and fetch the cards," the doctor said at last.

Mrs. Macphail looked at him doubtfully. Her conversation with the Davidsons had left her a little uneasy, but she did not like to say that she thought they had better not play cards when the Davidsons might come in at any moment. Dr. Macphail brought them and she watched him, though with a vague sense of guilt, while he laid out his patience. Below the sound of revelry continued.

It was fine enough next day, and the Macphails, condemned to spend a fortnight of idleness at Pago-Pago, set about making the best of things. They went down to the quay and got out of their boxes a number of books. The doctor called on the chief surgeon of the naval hospital and went round the beds with him. They left cards on the governor. They passed Miss Thompson on the road. The doctor took off his hat, and she gave him a "Good morning, Doc.," in a loud, cheerful voice. She was dressed as on the day before, in a white frock, and her shiny white boots with their high heels, her fat legs bulging over the tops of them, were strange things in that exotic scene.

"I don't think she's very suitably dressed, I must say,"

said Mrs. Macphail. "She looks extremely common to me."

When they got back to their house, she was on the verandah playing with one of the trader's dark children.

"Say a word to her," Dr. Macphail whispered to his wife. "She's all alone here, and it seems rather unkind to ignore her."

Mrs. Macphail was shy, but she was in the habit of doing what her husband bade her.

"I think we're fellow lodgers here," she said, rather foolishly.

"Terrible, ain't it, bein' cooped up in a one-horse burg like this?" answered Miss Thompson. "And they tell me I'm lucky to have gotten a room. I don't see myself livin' in a native house, and that's what some have to do. I don't know why they don't have an hotel."

They exchanged a few more words. Miss Thompson, loud-voiced and garrulous, was evidently quite willing to gossip, but Mrs. Macphail had a poor stock of small talk and presently she said:

"Well, I think we must go upstairs."

In the evening when they sat down to their high tea Davidson on coming in, said:

"I see that woman downstairs has a couple of sailors sitting there. I wonder how she's gotten acquainted with them."

"She can't be very partiular," said Mrs. Davidson.

They were all rather tired after the idle, aimless day.

"If there's to be a fortnight of this I don't know what we shall feel like at the end of it," said Dr. Macphail.

"The only thing to do is to portion out the day to different activities," answered the missionary. "I shall set aside a certain number of hours to study and a certain number to exercise, rain or fine—in the wet season you

can't afford to pay any attention to the rain—and a certain number to recreation.”

Dr. Macphail looked at his companion with misgiving. Davidson's programme oppressed him. They were eating Hamburger steak again. It seemed the only dish the cook knew how to make. Then below the gramophone began. Davidson started nervously when he heard it, but said nothing. Men's voices floated up. Miss Thompson's guests were joining in a well-known song and presently they heard her voice too, hoarse and loud. There was a good deal of shouting and laughing. The four people upstairs, trying to make conversation, listened despite themselves to the clink of glasses and the scrape of chairs. More persons had evidently come. Miss Thompson was giving a party.

“I wonder how she gets them all in,” said Mrs. Macphail, suddenly breaking into a medical conversation between the missionary and her husband.

It showed whither her thoughts were wandering. The twitch of Davidson's face proved that, though he spoke of scientific things, his mind was busy in the same quarter. Suddenly, while the doctor was giving some experience of practice on the Flanders front, rather prosily, he sprang to his feet with a cry.

“What's the matter, Alfred?” asked Mrs Davidson.

“Of course! It never occurred to me. She's out of Iwelei.”

“She can't be.”

“She came on board at Honolulu. It's obvious. And she's carrying on her trade here. Here.”

He uttered the last word with a passion of indignation.

“What's Iwelei?” asked Mrs. Macphail.

He turned his gloomy eyes on her and his voice trembled with horror.

"The plague spot of Honolulu. The Red Light district. It was a blot on our civilisation."

Iwelei was on the edge of the city. You went down side streets by the harbour, in the darkness, across a rickety bridge, till you came to a deserted road, all ruts and holes, and then suddenly you came out into the light. There was parking room for motors on each side of the road, and there were saloons, tawdry and bright, each one noisy with its mechanical piano, and there were barbers' shops and tobacconists. There was a stir in the air and a sense of expectant gaiety. You turned down a narrow alley, either to the right or to the left, for the road divided Iwelei into two parts, and you found yourself in the district. There were rows of little bungalows, trim and neatly painted in green, and the pathway between them was broad and straight. It was laid out like a garden-city. In its respectable regularity, its order and spruceness, it gave an impression of sardonic horror; for never can the search for love have been so systematised and ordered. The pathways were lit by a rare lamp, but they would have been dark except for the lights that came from the open windows of the bungalows. Men wandered about, looking at the women who sat at their windows, reading or sewing, for the most part taking no notice of the passers-by; and like the women they were of all nationalities. There were Americans, sailors from the ships in port, enlisted men off the gunboats, sombrely drunk, and soldiers from the regiments, white and black, quartered on the island; there were Japanese, walking in twos and threes; Hawaiians, Chinese in long robes, and Filipinos in preposterous hats. They were silent and as if they were oppressed. Desire is sad.

"It was the most crying scandal of the Pacific," exclaimed Davidson vehemently. "The missionaries had

been agitating against it for years, and at last the local press took it up. The police refused to stir. You know their argument. They say that vice is inevitable and consequently the best thing is to localise and control it. The truth is, they were paid. Paid. They were paid by the saloon-keepers, paid by the bullies, paid by the women themselves. At last they were forced to move."

"I read about it in the papers that came on board in Honolulu," said Dr. Macphail.

"Iwelei, with its sin and shame, ceased to exist on the very day we arrived. The whole population was brought before the justices. I don't know why I didn't understand at once what that woman was."

"Now you come to speak of it," said Mrs. Macphail, "I remember seeing her come on board only a few minutes before the boat sailed. I remember thinking at the time she was cutting it rather fine."

"How dare she come here!" cried Davidson indignantly. "I'm not going to allow it."

He strode towards the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked Macphail.

"What do you expect me to do? I'm going to stop it. I'm not going to have this house turned into—into . . ."

He sought for a word that should not offend the ladies' ears. His eyes were flashing and his pale face was paler still in his emotion.

"It sounds as though there were three or four men down there," said the doctor. "Don't you think it's rather rash to go in just now?"

The missionary gave him a contemptuous look and without a word flung out of the room.

"You know Mr. Davidson very little if you think the

fear of personal danger can stop him in the performance of his duty," said his wife.

She sat with her hands nervously clasped, a spot of colour on her high cheek bones, listening to what was about to happen below. They all listened. They heard him clatter down the wooden stairs and throw open the door. The singing stopped suddenly, but the gramophone continued to bray out its vulgar tune. They heard Davidson's voice and then the noise of something heavy falling. The music stopped. He had hurled the gramophone to the floor. Then again they heard Davidson's voice, they could not make out the words, then Miss Thompson's, loud and shrill, then a confused clamour as though several people were shouting together at the top of their lungs. Mrs. Davidson gave a little gasp, and she clenched her hands more tightly. Dr. Macphail looked uncertainly from her to his wife. He did not want to go down, but he wondered if they expected him to. Then there was something that sounded like a scuffle. The noise now was more distinct. It might be that Davidson was being thrown out of the room. The door was slammed. There was a moment's silence and they heard Davidson come up the stairs again. He went to his room.

"I think I'll go to him," said Mrs. Davidson.

She got up and went out.

"If you want me, just call," said Mrs. Macphail, and then when the other was gone: "I hope he isn't hurt."

"Why couldn't he mind his own business?" said Dr. Macphail.

They sat in silence for a minute or two and then they both started, for the gramophone began to play once more, defiantly, and mocking voices shouted hoarsely the words of an obscene song.

Next day Mrs. Davidson was pale and tired. She complained of headache and she looked old and wizened. She told Mrs. Macphail that the missionary had not slept at all; he had passed the night in a state of frightful agitation and at five had got up and gone out. A glass of beer had been thrown over him and his clothes were stained and stinking. But a sombre fire glowed in Mrs. Davidson's eyes when she spoke of Miss Thompson.

"She'll bitterly rue the day when she flouted Mr. Davidson," she said. "Mr. Davidson has a wonderful heart and no one who is in trouble has ever gone to him without being comforted, but he has no mercy for sin, and when his righteous wrath is excited he's terrible."

"Why, what will he do?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"I don't know, but I wouldn't stand in that creature's shoes for anything in the world."

Mrs. Macphail shuddered. There was something positively alarming in the triumphant assurance of the little woman's manner. They were going out together that morning, and they went down the stairs side by side. Miss Thompson's door was open, and they saw her in a bedraggled dressing-gown, cooking something in a chafing-dish.

"Good morning," she called. "Is Mr. Davidson better this morning?"

They passed her in silence, with their noses in the air, as if she did not exist. They flushed, however, when she burst into a shout of derisive laughter. Mrs. Davidson turned on her suddenly.

"Don't you dare to speak to me," she screamed. "If you insult me I shall have you turned out of here."

"Say, did I ask Mr. Davidson to visit with me?"

"Don't answer her," whispered Mrs. Macphail hurriedly.

They walked on till they were out of earshot.

"She's brazen, brazen," burst from Mrs. Davidson.

Her anger almost suffocated her.

And on their way home they met her strolling towards the quay. She had all her finery on. Her great white hat with its vulgar, showy flowers was an affront. She called out cheerily to them as she went by, and a couple of American sailors who were standing there grinned as the ladies set their faces to an icy stare. They got in just before the rain began to fall again.

"I guess she'll get her fine clothes spoilt," said Mrs. Davidson with a bitter sneer.

Davidson did not come in till they were half-way through dinner. He was wet through, but he would not change. He sat, morose and silent, refusing to eat more than a mouthful, and he stared at the slanting rain. When Mrs. Davidson told him of their two encounters with Miss Thompson he did not answer. His deepening frown alone showed that he had heard.

"Don't you think we ought to make Mr. Horn turn her out of here?" asked Mrs. Davidson. "We can't allow her to insult us."

"There doesn't seem to be any other place for her to go," said Macphail.

"She can live with one of the natives."

"In weather like this a native hut must be a rather uncomfortable place to live in."

"I lived in one for years," said the missionary.

When the little native girl brought in the fried bananas which formed the sweet they had every day, Davidson turned to her.

"Ask Miss Thompson when it would be convenient for me to see her," he said.

The girl nodded shyly and went out.

"What do you want to see her for, Alfred?" asked his wife.

"It's my duty to see her. I won't act till I've given her every chance."

"You don't know what she is. She'll insult you."

"Let her insult me. Let her spit on me. She has an immortal soul, and I must do all that is in my power to save it."

Mrs. Davidson's ears rang still with the harlot's mocking laughter.

"She's gone too far."

"Too far for the mercy of God?" His eyes lit up suddenly and his voice grew mellow and soft. "Never. The sinner may be deeper in sin than the depth of hell itself, but the love of the Lord Jesus can reach him still."

The girl came back with the message.

"Miss Thompson's compliments and as long as Rev. Davidson don't come in business hours she'll be glad to see him any time."

The party received it in stony silence, and Dr. Macphail quickly effaced from his lips the smile which had come upon them. He knew his wife would be vexed with him if he found Miss Thompson's effrontery amusing.

They finished the meal in silence. When it was over the two ladies got up and took their work (Mrs. Macphail was making another of the innumerable comforters which she had turned out since the beginning of the war) and the doctor lit his pipe. But Davidson remained in his chair and with abstracted eyes stared at the table. At last he got up and without a word went out of the room. They heard him go down and they heard Miss Thompson's defiant "Come in" when he knocked at the

door. He remained with her for an hour. And Dr. Macphail watched the rain. It was beginning to get on his nerves. It was not like our soft English rain that drops gently on the earth; it was unmerciful and somehow terrible; you felt in it the malignancy of the primitive powers of nature. It did not pour, it flowed. It was like a deluge from heaven, and it rattled on the roof of corrugated iron with a steady persistence that was maddening. It seemed to have a fury of its own. And sometimes you felt that you must scream if it did not stop, and then suddenly you felt powerless, as though your bones had become soft; and you were miserable and hopeless.

Macphail turned his head when the missionary came back. The two women looked up.

"I've given her every chance. I have exhorted her to repent. She is an evil woman."

He paused, and Dr. Macphail saw his eyes darken and his pale face grow hard and stern.

"Now I shall take the whips with which the Lord Jesus drove the usurers and the money changers out of the Temple of the Most High."

He walked up and down the room. His mouth was close set, and his black brows were frowning.

"If she fled to the uttermost parts of the earth I should pursue her."

With a sudden movement he turned round and strode out of the room. They heard him go downstairs again.

"What is he going to do?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"I don't know." Mrs. Davidson took off her *pince-nez* and wiped them. "When he is on the Lord's work I never ask him questions."

She sighed a little.

"What is the matter?"

"He'll wear himself out. He doesn't know what it is to spare himself."

Dr. Macphail learnt the first results of the missionary's activity from the half-caste trader in whose house they lodged. He stopped the doctor when he passed the store and came out to speak to him on the stoop. His fat face was worried.

"The Rev. Davidson has been at me for letting Miss Thompson have a room here," he said, "but I didn't know what she was when I rented it to her. When people come and ask if I can rent them a room all I want to know is if they've the money to pay for it. And she paid me for hers a week in advance."

Dr. Macphail did not want to commit himself.

"When all's said and done it's your house. We're very much obliged to you for taking us in at all."

Horn looked at him doubtfully. He was not certain yet how definitely Macphail stood on the missionary's side.

"The missionaries are in with one another," he said, hesitatingly. "If they get it in for a trader he may just as well shut up his store and quit."

"Did he want you to turn her out?"

"No, he said so long as she behaved herself he couldn't ask me to do that. He said he wanted to be just to me. I promised she shouldn't have no more visitors. I've just been and told her."

"How did she take it?"

"She gave me Hell."

The trader squirmed in his old ducks. He had found Miss Thompson a rough customer.

"Oh, well, I dare say she'll get out. I don't suppose she wants to stay here if she can't have anyone in."

"There's nowhere she can go, only a native house, and

no native'll take her now, not now that the missionaries have got their knife in her."

Dr. Macphail looked at the falling rain.

"Well, I don't suppose it's any good waiting for it to clear up."

In the evening when they sat in the parlour Davidson talked to them of his early days at college. He had had no means and had worked his way through by doing odd jobs during the vacations. There was silence downstairs. Miss Thompson was sitting in her little room alone. But suddenly the gramophone began to play. She had set it on in defiance, to cheat her loneliness, but there was no one to sing, and it had a melancholy note. It was like a cry for help. Davidson took no notice. He was in the middle of a long anecdote and without change of expression went on. The gramophone continued. Miss Thompson put on one reel after another. It looked as though the silence of the night were getting on her nerves. It was breathless and sultry. When the Macphails went to bed they could not sleep. They lay side by side with their eyes wide open, listening to the cruel singing of the mosquitoes outside their curtain.

"What's that?" whispered Mrs. Macphail at last.

They heard a voice, Davidson's voice, through the wooden partition. It went on with a monotonous, earnest insistence. He was praying aloud. He was praying for the soul of Miss Thompson.

Two or three days went by. Now when they passed Miss Thompson on the road she did not greet them with ironic cordiality or smile; she passed with her nose in the air, a sulky look on her painted face, frowning, as though she did not see them. The trader told Macphail that she had tried to get lodging elsewhere, but had failed. In the evening she played through the various records of

her gramophone, but the pretence of mirth was obvious now. The ragtime had a cracked, heart-broken rhythm as though it were a one-step of despair. When she began to play on Sunday Davidson sent Horn to beg her to stop at once since it was the Lord's day. The record was taken off and the house was silent except for the steady pattering of the rain on the iron roof.

"I think she's getting a bit worked up," said the trader next day to Macphail. "She don't know what Mr. Davidson's up to and it makes her scared."

Macphail had caught a glimpse of her that morning and it struck him that her arrogant expression had changed. There was in her face a hunted look. The half-caste gave him a sidelong glance.

"I suppose you don't know what Mr. Davidson is doing about it?" he hazarded.

"No, I don't."

It was singular that Horn should ask him that question, for he also had the idea that the missionary was mysteriously at work. He had an impression that he was weaving a net round the woman, carefully, systematically, and suddenly, when everything was ready, would pull the strings tight.

"He told me to tell her," said the trader, "that if at any time she wanted him she only had to send and he'd come."

"What did she say when you told her that?"

"She didn't say nothing. I didn't stop. I just said what he said I was to and then I beat it. I thought she might be going to start weepin'."

"I have no doubt the loneliness is getting on her nerves," said the doctor. "And the rain—that's enough to make anyone jumpy," he continued irritably. "Doesn't it ever stop in this confounded place?"

"It goes on pretty steady in the rainy season. We have three hundred inches in the year. You see, it's the shape of the bay. It seems to attract the rain from all over the Pacific."

"Damn the shape of the bay," said the doctor.

He scratched his mosquito bites. He felt very short-tempered. When the rain stopped and the sun shone, it was like a hothouse, seething, humid, sultry, breathless, and you had a strange feeling that everything was growing with a savage violence. The natives, blithe and childlike by reputation, seemed then, with their tattooing and their dyed hair, to have something sinister in their appearance; and when they pattered along at your heels with their naked feet you looked back instinctively. You felt they might at any moment come behind you swiftly and thrust a long knife between your shoulder blades. You could not tell what dark thoughts lurked behind their wide-set eyes. They had a little the look of ancient Egyptians painted on a temple wall, and there was about them the terror of what is immeasurably old.

The missionary came and went. He was busy, but the Macphails did not know what he was doing. Horn told the doctor that he saw the governor every day, and once Davidson mentioned him.

"He looks as if he had plenty of determination," he said, "but when you come down to brass tacks he has no backbone."

"I suppose that means he won't do exactly what you want," suggested the doctor facetiously.

The missionary did not smile.

"I want him to do what's right. It shouldn't be necessary to persuade a man to do that."

"But there may be differences of opinion about what is right."

"If a man had a gangrenous foot would you have patience with anyone who hesitated to amputate it?"

"Gangrene is a matter of fact."

"And Evil?"

What Davidson had done soon appeared. The four of them had just finished their midday meal, and they had not yet separated for the siesta which the heat imposed on the ladies and on the doctor. Davidson had little patience with the slothful habit. The door was suddenly flung open and Miss Thompson came in. She looked round the room and then went up to Davidson.

"You low-down skunk, what have you been saying about me to the governor?"

She was spluttering with rage. There was a moment's pause. The missionary drew forward a chair.

"Won't you be seated, Miss Thompson? I've been hoping to have another talk with you."

"You poor low-life bastard."

She burst into a torrent of foul and shameless insult. Davidson kept his grave eyes on her.

"I'm indifferent to the abuse you think fit to heap on me, Miss Thompson," he said, "but I must beg you to remember that ladies are present."

Tears by now were struggling with her anger. Her face was red and swollen as though she were choking.

"What has happened?" asked Dr. Macphail.

"A feller's just been in here and he says I gotter beat it on the next boat."

Was there a gleam in the missionary's eyes? His face remained impassive.

"You could hardly expect the governor to let you stay here under the circumstances."

"You done it," she shrieked. "You can't kid me. You done it."

"I don't want to deceive you. I urged the governor to take the only possible step consistent with his obligations."

"Why couldn't you leave me be? I wasn't doin' you no harm."

"You may be sure that if you had I should be the last man to resent it."

"Do you think I want to stay on in this poor imitation of a burg? I don't look no busher, do I?"

"In that case I don't see what cause of complaint you have," he answered.

She gave an inarticulate cry of rage and flung out of the room. There was a short silence.

"It's a relief to know that the governor has acted at last," said Davidson finally. "He's a weak man and he shilly-shallied. He said she was only here for a fortnight anyway, and if she went on to Apia that was under British jurisdiction and had nothing to do with him."

The missionary sprang to his feet and strode across the room.

"It's terrible the way the men who are in authority seek to evade their responsibility. They speak as though evil that was out of sight ceased to be evil. The very existence of that woman is a scandal and it does not help matters to shift it to another of the islands. In the end I had to speak straight from the shoulder."

Davidson's brow lowered, and he protruded his firm chin. He looked fierce and determined.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Our mission is not entirely without influence at Washington. I pointed out to the governor that it wouldn't do him any good if there was a complaint about the way he managed things here."

"When has she got to go?" asked the doctor, after a pause.

"The San Francisco boat is due here from Sydney next Tuesday. She's to sail on that."

That was in five days' time. It was next day, when he was coming back from the hospital where for want of something better to do Macphail spent most of his mornings, that the half-caste stopped him as he was going upstairs.

"Excuse me, Dr. Macphail, Miss Thompson's sick. Will you have a look at her."

"Certainly."

Horn led him to her room. She was sitting in a chair idly, neither reading nor sewing, staring in front of her. She wore her white dress and the large hat with the flowers on it. Macphail noticed that her skin was yellow and muddy under her powder, and her eyes were heavy.

"I'm sorry to hear you're not well," he said.

"Oh, I ain't sick really. I just said that, because I just had to see you. I've got to clear on a boat that's going to 'Frisco."

She looked at him and he saw that her eyes were suddenly startled. She opened and clenched her hands spasmodically. The trader stood at the door, listening.

"So I understand," said the doctor.

She gave a little gulp.

"I guess it ain't very convenient for me to go to 'Frisco just now. I went to see the governor yesterday afternoon but I couldn't get to him. I saw the secretary, and he told me I'd got to take that boat and that was all there was to it. I just had to see the governor, so I waited outside his house this morning, and when he come out I spoke to him. He didn't want to speak to me, I'll say, but I wouldn't let him shake me off, and at last

he said he hadn't no objection to my staying here till the next boat to Sydney if the Rev. Davidson will stand for it."

She stopped and looked at Dr. Macphail anxiously.

"I don't know exactly what I can do," he said.

"Well, I thought maybe you wouldn't mind asking him. I swear to God I won't start anything here if he'll just only let me stay. I won't go out of the house if that'll suit him. It's no more'n a fortnight."

"I'll ask him."

"He won't stand for it," said Horn. "He'll have you out on Tuesday, so you may as well make up your mind to it."

"Tell him I can get work in Sydney, straight stuff, I mean. 'Tain't asking very much."

"I'll do what I can."

"And come and tell me right away, will you? I can't set down to a thing till I get the dope one way or the other."

It was not an errand that much pleased the doctor, and, characteristically perhaps, he went about it indirectly. He told his wife what Miss Thompson had said to him and asked her to speak to Mrs. Davidson. The missionary's attitude seemed rather arbitrary and it could do no harm if the girl were allowed to stay in Pago-Pago another fortnight. But he was not prepared for the result of his diplomacy. The missionary came to him straightway.

"Mrs. Davidson tells me that Thompson has been speaking to you."

Dr. Macphail, thus directly tackled, had the shy man's resentment at being forced out into the open. He felt his temper rising, and he flushed.

"I don't see that it can make any difference if she goes

to Sydney rather than to San Francisco, and so long as she promises to behave while she's here it's dashed hard to persecute her."

The missionary fixed him with his stern eyes.

"Why is she unwilling to go back to San Francisco?"

"I didn't enquire," answered the doctor with some asperity. "And I think one does better to mind one's own business."

Perhaps it was not a very tactful answer.

"The governor has ordered her to be deported by the first boat that leaves the island. He's only done his duty and I will not interfere. Her presence is a peril here."

"I think you're very harsh and tyrannical."

The two ladies looked up at the doctor with some alarm, but they need not have feared a quarrel, for the missionary smiled gently.

"I'm terribly sorry you should think that of me, Dr. Macphail. Believe me, my heart bleeds for that unfortunate woman, but I'm only trying to do my duty."

The doctor made no answer. He looked out of the window sullenly. For once it was not raining and across the bay you saw nestling among the trees the huts of a native village.

"I think I'll take advantage of the rain stopping to go out," he said.

"Please don't bear me malice because I can't accede to your wish," said Davidson, with a melancholy smile. "I respect you very much, Doctor, and I should be sorry if you thought ill of me."

"I have no doubt you have a sufficiently good opinion of yourself to bear mine with equanimity," he retorted.

"That's one on me," chuckled Davidson.

When Dr. Macphail, vexed with himself because he

had been uncivil to no purpose, went downstairs, Miss Thompson was waiting for him with her door ajar.

"Well," she said, "have you spoken to him?"

"Yes. I'm sorry, he won't do anything," he answered, not looking at her in his embarrassment.

But then he gave her a quick glance, for a sob broke from her. He saw that her face was white with fear. It gave him a shock of dismay. And suddenly he had an idea.

"But don't give up hope yet. I think it's a shame the way they're treating you and I'm going to see the governor myself."

"Now?"

He nodded. Her face brightened.

"Say, that's real good of you. I'm sure he'll let me stay if you speak for me. I just won't do a thing I didn't ought all the time I'm here."

Dr. Macphail hardly knew why he had made up his mind to appeal to the governor. He was perfectly indifferent to Miss Thompson's affairs, but the missionary had irritated him, and with him temper was a smouldering thing. He found the governor at home. He was a large handsome man, a sailor, with a grey toothbrush moustache; and he wore a spotless uniform of white drill.

"I've come to see you about a woman who's lodging in the same house as we are," he said. "Her name's Thompson."

"I guess I've heard nearly enough about her, Dr. Macphail," said the governor, smiling. "I've given her the order to get out next Tuesday and that's all I can do."

"I wanted to ask you if you couldn't stretch a point and let her stay here till the boat comes in from San

Francisco so that she can go to Sydney. I will guarantee her good behaviour."

The governor continued to smile, but his eyes grew small and serious.

"I'd be very glad to oblige you, Dr. Macphail, but I've given the order and it must stand."

The doctor put the case as reasonably as he could, but now the governor ceased to smile at all. He listened sullenly with averted gaze. Macphail saw that he was making no impression.

"I'm sorry to cause any lady inconvenience, but she'll have to sail on Tuesday and that's all there is to it."

"But what difference can it make?"

"Pardon me, Doctor, but I don't feel called upon to explain my official actions except to the proper authorities."

Macphail looked at him shrewdly. He remembered Davidson's hint that he had used threats and in the governor's attitude he read a singular embarrassment.

"Davidson's a damned busybody," he said hotly.

"Between ourselves, Dr. Macphail, I don't say that I have formed a very favourable opinion of Mr. Davidson, but I am bound to confess that he was within his rights in pointing out to me the danger that the presence of a woman of Miss Thompson's character was to a place like this where a number of enlisted men are stationed among a native population."

He got up and Dr. Macphail was obliged to do so too.

"I must ask you to excuse me. I have an engagement. Please give my respects to Mrs. Macphail."

The doctor left him crest-fallen. He knew that Miss Thompson would be waiting for him, and unwilling to tell her himself that he had failed, he went into the house

by the back door and sneaked up the stairs as though he had something to hide.

At supper he was silent and ill-at-ease, but the missionary was jovial and animated. Dr. Macphail thought his eyes rested on him now and then with triumphant good-humour. It struck him suddenly that Davidson knew of his visit to the governor and of its ill success. But how on earth could he have heard of it? There was something sinister about the power of that man. After supper he saw Horn on the verandah and, as though to have a casual word with him, went out.

"She wants to know if you've seen the governor," the trader whispered.

"Yes. He wouldn't do anything. I'm awfully sorry, I can't do anything more."

"I knew he wouldn't. They daren't go against the missionaries."

"What are you talking about?" said Davidson affably, coming out to join them.

"I was just saying there's no chance of your getting over to Apia for at least another week," said the trader glibly.

He left them, and the two men returned to the parlour. Mr. Davidson devoted one hour after each meal to recreation. Presently a timid knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Davidson, in her sharp voice.

The door was not opened. She got up and opened it. They saw Miss Thompson standing at the threshold. But the change in her appearance was extraordinary. This was no longer the flaunting hussy who had jeered at them in the road, but a broken, frightened woman. Her hair, as a rule so elaborately arranged, was tumbling untidily over her neck. She wore bedroom slippers and a skirt and blouse. They were unfresh and bedraggled.

She stood at the door with the tears streaming down her face and did not dare to enter.

"What do you want?" said Mrs. Davidson harshly.

"May I speak to Mr. Davidson?" she said in a choking voice.

The missionary rose and went towards her.

"Come right in, Miss Thompson," he said in cordial tones. "What can I do for you?"

She entered the room.

"Say, I'm sorry for what I said to you the other day an' for—for everythin' else. I guess I was a bit lit up. I beg pardon."

"Oh, it was nothing. I guess my back's broad enough to bear a few hard words."

She stepped towards him with a movement that was horribly cringing.

"You've got me beat. I'm all in. You won't make me go back to 'Frisco?"

His genial manner vanished and his voice grew on a sudden hard and stern.

"Why don't you want to go back there?"

She cowered before him.

"I guess my people live there. I don't want them to see me like this. I'll go anywhere else you say."

"Why don't you want to go back to San Francisco?"

"I've told you."

He leaned forward, staring at her, and his great, shining eyes seemed to try to bore into her soul. He gave a sudden gasp.

"The penitentiary."

She screamed, and then she fell at his feet, clasping his legs.

"Don't send me back there. I swear to you before God I'll be a good woman. I'll give all this up."

She burst into a torrent of confused supplication and the tears coursed down her painted cheeks. He learned over her and, lifting her face, forced her to look at him.

"Is that it, the penitentiary?"

"I beat it before they could get me," she gasped. "If the bulls grab me it's three years for mine."

He let go his hold of her and she fell in a heap on the floor, sobbing bitterly. Dr. Macphail stood up.

"This alters the whole thing," he said. "You can't make her go back when you know this. Give her another chance. She wants to turn over a new leaf."

"I'm going to give her the finest chance she's ever had. If she repents let her accept her punishment."

She misunderstood the words and looked up. There was a gleam of hope in her heavy eyes.

"You'll let me go?"

"No. You shall sail for San Francisco on Tuesday."

She gave a groan of horror and then burst into low, hoarse shrieks which sounded hardly human, and she beat her head passionately on the ground. Dr. Macphail sprang to her and lifted her up.

"Come on, you musn't do that. You'd better go to your room and lie down. I'll get you something."

He raised her to her feet and partly dragging her, partly carrying her, got her downstairs. He was furious with Mrs. Davidson and with his wife because they made no effort to help. The half-caste was standing on the landing and with his assistance he managed to get her on the bed. She was moaning and crying. She was almost insensible. He gave her a hypodermic injection. He was hot and exhausted when he went upstairs again.

"I've got her to lie down."

The two women and Davidson were in the same posi-

tions as when he had left them. They could not have moved or spoken since he went.

"I was waiting for you," said Davidson, in a strange, distant voice. "I want you all to pray with me for the soul of our erring sister."

He took the Bible off a shelf, and sat down at the table at which they had supped. It had not been cleared, and he pushed the tea-pot out of the way. In a powerful voice, resonant and deep, he read to them the chapter in which is narrated the meeting of Jesus Christ with the woman taken in adultery.

"Now kneel with me and let us pray for the soul of our dear sister, Sadie Thompson."

He burst into a long, passionate prayer in which he implored God to have mercy on the sinful woman. Mrs. Macphail and Mrs. Davidson knelt with covered eyes. The doctor, taken by surprise, awkward and sheepish, knelt too. The missionary's prayer had a savage eloquence. He was extraordinarily moved, and as he spoke the tears ran down his cheeks. Outside, the pitiless rain fell, fell steadily, with a fierce malignity that was all too human.

At last he stopped. He paused for a moment and said:

"We will now repeat the Lord's prayer."

They said it and then, following him, they rose from their knees. Mrs. Davidson's face was pale and restful. She was comforted and at peace, but the Macphails felt suddenly shy. They did not know which way to look.

"I'll just go down and see how she is now," said Dr. Macphail.

When he knocked at her door it was opened for him by Horn. Miss Thompson was in a rocking-chair, sobbing quietly.

"What are you doing there?" exclaimed Macphail. "I told you to lie down."

"I can't lie down. I want to see Mr. Davidson."

"My poor child, what do you think is the good of it? You'll never move him."

"He said he'd come if I sent for him."

Macphail motioned to the trader.

"Go and fetch him."

He waited with her in silence while the trader went upstairs. Davidson came in.

"Excuse me for asking you to come here," she said looking at him sombrely.

"I was expecting you to send for me. I knew the Lord would answer my prayer."

They stared at one another for a moment and then she looked away. She kept her eyes averted when she spoke.

"I've been a bad woman. I want to repent."

"Thank God! Thank God! He has heard our prayers." He turned to the two men.

"Leave me alone with her. Tell Mrs. Davidson that our prayers have been answered."

They went out and closed the door behind them.

"Gee whizz," said the trader.

That night Dr. Macphail could not get to sleep till late, and when he heard the missionary come upstairs he look at his watch. It was two o'clock. But even then he did not go to bed at once, for through the wooden partition that separated their rooms he heard him praying aloud, till he himself, exhausted, fell asleep.

When he saw him next morning he was surprised at his appearance. He was paler than ever, tired, but his eyes shone with an inhuman fire. It looked as though he were filled with an overwhelming joy.

"I want you to go down presently and see Sadie," he said. "I can't hope that her body is better, but her soul—her soul is transformed."

The doctor was feeling wan and nervous.

"You were with her very late last night," he said.

"Yes, she couldn't bear to have me leave her."

"You look as pleased as Punch," the doctor said irritably.

Davidson's eyes shone with ecstasy.

"A great mercy has been vouchsafed me. Last night I was privileged to bring a lost soul to the loving arms of Jesus."

Miss Thompson was again in the rocking-chair. The bed had not been made. The room was in disorder. She had not troubled to dress herself, but wore a dirty dressing-gown and her hair was tied in a sluttish knot. She had given her face a dab with a wet towel but it was all swollen and creased with crying. She looked a drab.

She raised her eyes dully when the doctor came in. She was cowed and broken.

"Where's Mr. Davidson?" she asked.

"He'll come presently if you want him," answered Macphail acidly. "I came here to see how you were."

"Oh, I guess I'm O.K. You needn't worry about that."

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"Horn brought me some coffee."

She looked anxiously at the door.

"D'you think he'll come down soon? I feel as if it wasn't so terrible when he's with me."

"Are you still going on Tuesday?"

"Yes, he says I've got to go. Please tell him to come right along. You can't do me any good. He's the only one as can help me now."

"Very well," said Dr. Macphail.

During the next three days the missionary spent almost all his time with Sadie Thompson. He joined the others only to have his meals. Dr. Macphail noticed that he hardly ate.

"He's wearing himself out," said Mrs. Davidson pitifully. "He'll have a breakdown if he doesn't take care, but he won't spare himself."

She herself was white and pale. She told Mrs. Macphail that she had no sleep. When the missionary came upstairs from Miss Thompson he prayed till he was exhausted, but even then he did not sleep for long. After an hour or two he got up and dressed himself, and went for a tramp along the bay. He had strange dreams.

"This morning he told me that he'd been dreaming about the mountains of Nebraska," said Mrs. Davidson.

"That's curious," said Dr. Macphail.

He remembered seeing them from the windows of the train when he crossed America. They were like huge mole-hills, rounded and smooth, and they rose from the plain abruptly. Dr. Macphail remembered how it struck him that they were like a woman's breasts.

Davidson's restlessness was intolerable even to himself. But he was buoyed up by a wonderful exhilaration. He was tearing out by the roots the last vestiges of sin that lurked in the hidden corners of that poor woman's heart. He read with her and prayed with her.

"It's wonderful," he said to them one day at supper. "It's a true rebirth. Her soul, which was black as night, is now pure and white like the new-fallen snow. I am humble and afraid. Her remorse for all her sins is beautiful. I am not worthy to touch the hem of her garment."

"Have you the heart to send her back to San Fran-

cisco?" said the doctor. "Three years in an American prison. I should have thought you might have saved her from that."

"Ah, but don't you see? It's necessary. Do you think my heart doesn't bleed for her? I love her as I love my wife and my sister. All the time that she is in prison I shall suffer all the pain that she suffers."

"Bunkum," cried the doctor impatiently.

"You don't understand because you're blind. She's sinned, and she must suffer. I know what she'll endure. She'll be starved and tortured and humiliated. I want her to accept the punishment of man as a sacrifice to God. I want her to accept it joyfully. She has an opportunity which is offered to very few of us. God is very good and very merciful."

Davidson's voice trembled with excitement. He could hardly articulate the words that tumbled passionately from his lips.

"All day I pray with her and when I leave her I pray again, I pray with all my might and main, so that Jesus may grant her this great mercy. I want to put in her heart the passionate desire to be punished so that at the end, even if I offered to let her go, she would refuse. I want her to feel that the bitter punishment of prison is the thank-offering that she places at the feet of our Blessed Lord, who gave His life for her."

The days passed slowly. The whole household, intent on the wretched, tortured woman downstairs, lived in a state of unnatural excitement. She was like a victim that was being prepared for the savage rites of a bloody idolatry. Her terror numbed her. She could not bear to let Davidson out of her sight; it was only when he was with her that she had courage, and she hung upon him with a slavish dependence. She cried a great deal, and she

read the Bible, and prayed. Sometimes she was exhausted and apathetic. Then she did indeed look forward to her ordeal, for it seemed to offer an escape, direct and concrete, from the anguish she was enduring. She could not bear much longer the vague terrors which now assailed her. With her sins she had put aside all personal vanity, and she slopped about her room, unkempt and dishevelled, in her tawdry dressing-gown. She had not taken off her nightdress for four days, nor put on stockings. Her room was littered and untidy. Meanwhile the rain fell with a cruel persistence. You felt that the heavens must at last be empty of water, but still it poured down, straight and heavy, with a maddening iteration, on the iron roof. Everything was damp and clammy. There was mildew on the walls and on the boots that stood on the floor. Through the sleepless nights the mosquitoes droned their angry chant.

"If it would only stop raining for a single day it wouldn't be so bad," said Dr. Macphail.

They all looked forward to the Tuesday when the boat for San Francisco was to arrive from Sydney. The strain was intolerable. So far as Dr. Macphail was concerned, his pity and his resentment were alike extinguished by his desire to be rid of the unfortunate woman. The inevitable must be accepted. He felt he would breathe more freely when the ship had sailed. Sadie Thompson was to be escorted on board by a clerk in the governor's office. This person called on the Monday evening and told Miss Thompson to be prepared at eleven in the morning. Davidson was with her.

"I'll see that everything is ready. I mean to come on board with her myself."

Miss Thompson did not speak.

When Dr. Macphail blew out his candle and crawled

cautiously under his mosquito curtains, he gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, thank God, that's over. By this time to-morrow she'll be gone."

"Mrs. Davidson will be glad too. She says he's wearing himself to a shadow," said Mrs. Macphail. "She's a different woman."

"Who?"

"Sadie. I should never have thought it possible. It makes one humble."

Dr. Macphail did not answer, and presently he fell asleep. He was tired out, and he slept more soundly than usual.

He was awakened in the morning by a hand placed on his arm, and, starting up, saw Horn by the side of his bed. The trader put his finger on his mouth to prevent any exclamation from Dr. Macphail and beckoned to him to come. As a rule he wore shabby ducks, but now he was barefoot and wore only the lava-lava of the natives. He looked suddenly savage, and Dr. Macphail, getting out of bed, saw that he was heavily tattooed. Horn made him a sign to come on to the verandah. Dr. Macphail got out of bed and followed the trader out.

"Don't make a noise," he whispered. "You're wanted. Put on a coat and some shoes. Quick."

Dr. Macphail's first thought was that something had happened to Miss Thompson.

"What is it? Shall I bring my instruments?"

"Hurry, please, hurry."

Dr. Macphail crept back into the bedroom, put on a waterproof over his pyjamas, and a pair of rubber-soled shoes. He rejoined the trader, and together they tiptoed down the stairs. The door leading out to the road was open and at it were standing half a dozen natives.

"What is it?" repeated the doctor.

"Come along with me," said Horn.

He walked out and the doctor followed him. The natives came after them in a little bunch. They crossed the road and came on to the beach. The doctor saw a group of natives standing round some object at the water's edge. They hurried along, a couple of dozen yards perhaps, and the natives opened out as the doctor came up. The trader pushed him forwards. Then he saw, lying half in the water and half out, a dreadful object, the body of Davidson. Dr. Macphail bent down and turned the body over. The throat was cut from ear to ear, and in the right hand was a razor.

"He's quite cold," said the doctor. "He must have been dead some time."

"One of the boys saw him lying there on his way to work just now and came and told me. Do you think he did it himself?"

"Yes. Someone ought to go for the police."

Horn said something in the native tongue, and two youths started off.

"We must leave him here till they come," said the doctor.

"They mustn't take him into my house. I won't have him in my house."

"You'll do what the authorities say," replied the doctor sharply. "In point of fact I expect they'll take him to the mortuary."

They stood waiting where they were. The trader took a cigarette from a fold in his lava-lava and gave one to Dr. Macphail. They smoked while they stared at the corpse. Dr. Macphail could not understand.

"Why do you think he did it?" asked Horn.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. In a little while

native police came along, under the charge of a marine, with a stretcher, and immediately afterwards a couple of naval officers and a naval doctor. They managed everything in a businesslike manner.

"What about the wife?" said one of the officers.

"Now that you've come I'll go back to the house and get some things on. I'll see that it's broken to her. She'd better not see him till he's been fixed up a little."

"I guess that's right," said the naval doctor.

When Dr. Macphail went back he found his wife nearly dressed.

"Mrs. Davidson's in a dreadful state about her husband," she said to him as soon as he appeared. "He hasn't been to bed all night. She heard him leave Miss Thompson's room at two, but he went out. If he's been walking about since then he'll be absolutely dead."

Dr. Macphail told her what had happened and asked her to break the news to Mrs. Davidson.

"But why did he do it?" she asked, horror-stricken.

"I don't know."

"But I can't. I can't."

"You must."

She gave him a frightened look and went out. He heard her go into Mrs. Davidson's room. He waited a minute to gather himself together and then began to shave and wash. When he was dressed he sat down on the bed and waited for his wife. At last she came.

"She wants to see him," she said.

"They've taken him to the mortuary. We'd better go down with her. How did she take it?"

"I think she's stunned. She didn't cry. But she's trembling like a leaf."

"We'd better go at once."

When they knocked at her door Mrs. Davidson came

out. She was very pale, but dry-eyed. To the doctor she seemed unnaturally composed. No word was exchanged, and they set out in silence down the road. When they arrived at the mortuary Mrs. Davidson spoke.

"Let me go in and see him alone."

They stood aside. A native opened a door and closed it behind her. They sat down and waited. One or two white men came and talked to them in undertones. Dr. Macphail told them again what he knew of the tragedy. At last the door was quietly opened and Mrs. Davidson came out. Silence fell upon them.

"I'm ready to go back now," she said.

Her voice was hard and steady. Dr. Macphail could not understand the look in her eyes. Her pale face was very stern. They walked back slowly, never saying a word, and at last they came round the bend on the other side of which stood their house. Mrs. Davidson gave a gasp, and for a moment they stopped still. An incredible sound assaulted their ears. The gramophone which had been silent for so long was playing, playing ragtime loud and harsh.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Macphail with horror.

"Let's go on," said Mrs. Davidson.

They walked up the steps and entered the hall. Miss Thompson was standing at her door, chatting with a sailor. A sudden change had taken place in her. She was no longer the cowed drudge of the last days. She was dressed in all her finery, in her white dress, with the high shiny boots over which her fat legs bulged in their cotton stockings; her hair was elaborately arranged; and she wore that enormous hat covered with gaudy flowers. Her face was painted, her eyebrows were boldly blacked, and her lips were scarlet. She held herself erect. She was the flaunting quean that they had known at first. As

they came in she burst into a loud jeering laugh; and then, when Mrs. Davidson involuntarily stopped, she collected the spittle in her mouth and spat. Mrs. Davidson cowered back, and two red spots rose suddenly to her cheeks. Then, covering her face with her hands, she broke away and ran quickly up the stairs. Dr. Macphail was outraged. He pushed past the woman into her room.

"What the devil are you doing?" he cried. "Stop that damned machine."

He went up to it and tore the record off. She turned on him.

"Say, Doc, you can that stuff with me. What the hell are you doin' in my room?"

"What do you mean?" he cried. "What d'you mean?"

She gathered herself together. No one could describe the scorn of her expression or the contemptuous hatred she put into her answer.

"You men! You filthy, dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs!"

Dr. Macphail gasped. He understood.





ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

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LOVELLS MEETING

LOVELL, in Lisbon, felt like Byron: "I am very happy here, because I loves oranges, and talks bad Latin to the monks . . . and swims the Tagus all across at once, and swears Portuguese." He did all these things, and enjoyed them as much as Byron had—more because while Byron had escaped from money-troubles which would still be going on when he went back, Lovell had escaped from love-troubles, which would not. He could never have foreseen the sanctuary; yet here he was, for he alone of his firm knew Portuguese, and there was an important job in Lisbon. One morning, now six weeks ago, he had been sent for by the chief and packed off that same night—but he enjoyed a rush, provided it was at the behest of others. Only so could Lovell endure to be disorientated. "She" had not liked this trait in him, for her behests (such as they were) had not been thus effectual; Lovell, believing what he said, had assured her that this was because he loved her.

In the sun at Lisbon Lovell stretched himself, and thought how peaceful it could be to have no woman in your life. His six weeks had brought it home to him—you had to get away from home, for that. In London he had moped a good deal, during the four or five months (his six weeks made it into five months and a fortnight exactly) that had gone by since she had given him a word

or sign of any kind. He had been puzzled and distraught; she *had* upset him, this time. Utter silence; not a word or sign; and words and signs had been her specialities. She was eminently articulate and expressive; Lovell was a little self-consciously the reverse. She said he had become so. If that were true he felt it was because her great expressiveness had inhibited the faculty in him. The letter which she had not answered was a model of frigidity; Lovell granted that, but somehow he had not been able to write in any other way; it wasn't obstinacy—he really hadn't been able. The state of inhibition, if that was what it was, had begun some time ago, and had culminated in this letter, from whose presumable receipt by her their parting might be said to date. For Lovell had left it there; he hadn't written again, and he felt that she had known he wouldn't. So it was what people called "a rupture"; acquiescence in such silence must, from her, mean definitely that. He paid tribute to her sense of the consecutive—if she couldn't bear his manner of being, she couldn't bear *him*. Had that been his reaction, too?—could he not bear *her* manner of being, and therefore not bear her? It might be so, but he hadn't been aware of it until she showed him, by this whole surcease, how much of calm their intercourse had reft from him. Calm and safety were the great things; in the sun at Lisbon, Lovell stretched himself. He was used to the break now; he scarcely ever thought of her, and knew he didn't.

. . . And so it was he who had escaped; not she! What a cruelly ironic joke that was, for it had been she who sometimes longed to fly, to lose herself from him; and he had flown instead and he had lost himself from her—the very dream that in their makings-up (their scores of makings-up!) she would confess to as the darling of

her heart when they were cross with one another. The dream now would not come true for her, since it was he alone who had set up in her that kind of restlessness. She had never—so she said, and he believed her—been restless at all “before”; but when they fell in love and stayed in love and yet began to strive with one another, she had wanted desperately, sometimes, to escape from him. He had known why, and how, this feeling came to her, but he had never told her that he did; his position was that no man could or should understand that kind of thing.

“It’s like barbed-wire!” That was one thing she said.

“Then don’t tear yourself to pieces on it,” he had answered, watching her. He used to watch her—he could grant that now; watch her with a curiosity which he had often felt to be callous, yet of which he often, too, had felt a little proud; it signified detachment, and detachment was a great thing. First one prick and then another, till they held her fast in all directions, and she panted and she struggled—but he watched her till reaction came and she was quiet, he still watching, though no man could understand, and would not if he could. But it had been painful to him—for he taught, and really did believe in, the doctrine of free fields for everyone; yet it was clear that with a woman in your life you couldn’t do without barbed-wire. Anyhow, here he was in Lisbon, amid oranges and monks, with the Tagus to swim; and she knew nothing about it. She would be thinking of him, angrily or sadly, as pent in London like herself—what phase would *he* be at, by now, if the escape had not been his? First he had been defiant; then lugubrious; then cynical and stoical; then a sort of dry-rot had set in—he had looked for her round every corner, had nearly blinded himself by searching trains and buses, had im-

agined encounters that never came off . . . for until he had thus tested it, Lovell could not have believed in London's power of segregation. That two people could so utterly lose sight of one another! During the day it was not strange, since he was shut up in the office; but they had friends in common, their ways of life had touched before they fell in love—and now it was as though they dwelt in different planets. She must have been as much amazed as he. But amazement had died down in him, before the flight to Lisbon: he had reached what often felt like calm and acquiescence, but sometimes felt more like a sort of dream from which you woke up, every now and then, to a queer sense that the Whole Thing was waiting. It was like the sense which music gives, that every note is drawing every other to a consummation deeply felt by each in turn, but never by the note that still is sounding—it is afterwards that the notes learn the secret. He felt this always when he heard instrumental music; it absorbed him so that he could never listen to the ostensible theme. And that was how it had sometimes been with him until the rush to Lisbon; but now he found himself more rational, and among the rational effects was that he thought of her (when he did think, which was practically never) as certainly by this time quite inured, as he was.

. . . If she could see him, with his monks and oranges and Tagus! He felt, as he generally did in foreign lands, a good deal more of a personage; it was no doubt because one's observation and intelligence were kept at a more stimulating level. All the "cleverness" with which he was persistently credited, and in which he never could at home believe, did seem in foreign countries to convince him. He felt that he saw things and understood them; his wits, and his wit, were sources of continual delight—

it really *was*, in a word, being more of a personage. Not that she had not always thought him, and (of course) informed him that she thought him, one; but Lovell, in his native state of modesty, had systematically snubbed her on that question. "Why must she drag in imaginary attributes to deck him with—wasn't he good enough for her as he was?"

"Too good," she used to say, and there again he'd had to snub her. People weren't "too good" for one another. She had liked that—yes, she'd seen that point; but she distorted it; the implication was that she was the one favoured by the gods, in finding him. In fact, that sort of thing was what had bothered Lovell all along. He had never been able to get their relation matter-of-course enough, had never brought her really to perceive that there was nothing wonderful in love. "Nothing to write home about," he had cried one day, in high delight, having newly learnt the phrase from an American. It made her laugh, but she spoilt the effect of her laugh by making a phrase of her own.

"No; nothing to write home about," she said; "but something to write heaven about."

He had not liked that. He had *not*, whatever he might have said or done at the moment—for she could say such things divinely. But all this of "wonderful," and "heaven" . . . no! It didn't enough take for granted, and to take for granted was the thing. There could be no doubt that she was sentimental: as little that he wasn't. At bottom, that had been the trouble. She wanted signs and tokens; he could do without them—he preferred to do without them; or at any rate he usually did. Of course, one had weak moments. But the great thing was to know those *for* weak moments in which you wanted signs and tokens; the great thing was to take the whole of

it for granted, and to go on more or less as if it wasn't there at all (and rather more than less), for that was the supreme initiation—to have love, and to thrust it utterly aside. Then you knew you truly had it; if it would thrive under complete neglect, it had real roots. But she had not agreed in that, and so he'd had to set up the barbed-wire. If she wouldn't see the beauty of his system, she must bear what *she* called its atrocity; and if her way with it did make it seem atrocious that was her fault, not the system's.

So he stretched himself, and turned to watch a monk attending to an orange-tree. The monastery garden (to which Lovell had the entry at all hours) grew many of this evidently special kind—the monks were always doing something to them. It was a delightful thing to look at, in the morning sun: the white-gowned monk, the dark-green leaves about his head, the golden fruit that hung so proudly and so steadily—there was extraordinary dignity in oranges.

"They keep you busy," Lovell said, in Byron's bad Latin, to the monk. ("They understand it," Byron wrote, "because it is like their own.")

"Yes; but they keep us happy too," the monk replied in *his* bad Latin (just as bad as Lovell's; Byron was right!) turning his head with a smile, but going back to his work immediately. He didn't want to talk; he was "all for them." No matter; Lovell sat there, smoking thin black cigarettes, and reflecting on his deep content.

. . . Now she, had she been here, would certainly have pestered that monk to talk and neglect his oranges. A woman never understood that precious things must have the special care they need; a woman seemed to think it was a fluke when fruits and flowers flourished—she put it down to air and sun and climate and the nature of the

things, when more than half of it was in the exquisite solicitude of somebody who cared about them. See that monk, peering and pruning, and then gazing at the slowly ripening fruit he seemed almost to worship, and worshipful it was in colour, scent, and texture—gorgeous texture, for the oranges were not the yellow, thin-skinned kind (which Lovell never could admire), but thick, rough-skinned, really *orange* fellows, all the more surprising in the fineness of their flavour. Their roughness, too, lent piquancy to the incessant care they needed; you'd have thought that nothing could affect them.

"They are deceivers, yes?" the monk had answered, when Lovell had said this one day. "But they have no intention to deceive. So it is, with them; and we—if we will have them, we must tend them."

Sound philosophy! They needn't have this kind, unless they chose. If every one was wise, like that, the whole world might be as peaceful as the monastery garden. But then it *was* a monastery garden: not a woman in it. Lovell smiled, a trifle bitterly; then suppressed the smile—he wasn't bitter in the least.

. . . Of course, the first time, he'd felt like the guilty one. He had been harassed, things were all to pieces; he didn't tell her that, but stopped their meetings, never saying why, although he wrote to tell her not even to write. Then, when he summoned her again, and she came (as she did at once), and he told her of the hideous weeks he'd had, there had been trouble. Not much that time—only a foretaste! She was hurt because he hadn't told her until now: she "wanted to count in his bad times even more than in his good ones." He had snubbed her a little, quite a little (for it was the first time), telling her that that was sentimental. Her comment on it had been puzzling; he didn't understand it even now.

"Supposing I hadn't come?" she said.

"It would have been abominable of you," he had answered.

Something in the way she laughed (for she did laugh, though he had spoken gravely), and still more something in the way she looked at him, had puzzled him extremely. The laugh was genuine, the searching look was merry. He had felt, for an instant, as if he really "didn't understand"—as if she saw some point he didn't see. But it had passed, and they had been all right again, until the next time. The next time had been a degree more strenuous, and the next, and next. . . . "This is our breaking-point," she said at last.

Here was where the barbed-wire first came in. "He didn't know what she could mean by that," he had said stiffly; "there were no breaking-points when people had thrown in their lots with one another." He had, still stiffly, watched her pick the barbs from her, for she did pick them out that first time—or rather, left them in and tried to make herself at ease with them. That didn't last; it was not long before she found herself impaled again, and struggling. Oh, it had gone on! He had not wanted her to break away; all he had wanted was that she should learn the uselessness of struggling. Once she had learnt that he would himself have picked the barbs out for her, even might have scrapped the wire. But she had broken away, instead; and now the breach had lasted so long that if they ever *should* be reconciled, there couldn't be any reference to it. All they could possibly do was either to remain as they were, or rush into each other's arms and never, then or afterwards, say anything at all about their rupture.

Did he desire the latter? He reflected—not for the first time; and decided, as he always did, that he desired

it only if she were to be what she had been "at first." That phrase he had caught from her; she used to talk about what *he* had been "at first"; but she meant something sentimental, and Lovell of course didn't.

. . . He started—there had sounded a sharp exclamation from the monk.

"What's happened?" Lovell called; then, looking, saw that the monk held an orange in his hand.

"Fallen?" Lovell asked.

"Alas! fallen, of itself—without my fault. And not yet ripe, by no means ripe. So there will be no ripening; these ones cannot, off the tree."

Something about the incident vexed Lovell. The monk stood gazing at the orange, with so sad and helpless an expression. What was the good of that? The only rational course, now, was to throw the thing away.

"Give it to me," said Lovell.

"You cannot enjoy it, senhor; it is not yet ripe."

"I don't want to enjoy it; I want to hide it away," said Lovell, angry with himself for weakly substituting "hide" for "throw"—but he liked the monk, and "throw" might pain him in his present state.

"Because it makes me sorry—yes? Ah, that is kind"; and the monk came to his seat, and gave him the orange.

Lovell began to toss it from one hand to the other. The monk, watching him, winced slightly.

"The senhor is kind and cruel both," he said. "The orange cannot be enjoyed, so he will bruise it."

"That's all it's good for now," said Lovell, continuing to toss it carelessly. He looked up at the monk, who still seemed troubled. Suddenly the orange fell into the dust—Lovell had missed a catch.

"Ahi!" cried the monk, and quickly went away.

But though he had gone back to his tree, Lovell knew

that he was fretting still for the spoilt fruit that could not ripen now, and the incident continued to be vexing. The perfect mood was gone; but anyhow, it must be getting on to time for the noon meal at the hotel. The Angelus had gone just as he reached the garden; that had meant, in reality, half-past nine and more instead of nine, for the monastery clock was very slow—it *would* be! Lovell took out his watch, and found that he must have forgotten to wind it. That would have worried him at home; but here he rather liked to catch himself in little negligences: it was part of the holiday-state, like never looking at a newspaper—not that he looked at them at home; but abroad, such abstention took on the general enhancement; there was something really worth while in rejecting “the English papers,” when most of one’s compatriots whirled about like dervishes at the sight of them.

Well, since he’d forgotten to wind his watch, he would have to guess at the “right time.” He must have been in the garden an hour and a half at the very least; that brought it to eleven now, probably more. The walk back to the hotel took over half an hour if one went slowly; it was all uphill, and to-day, with such a cooking sun, one wouldn’t feel inclined to hurry. Since the perfect mood of laziness and full oblivion of the past was gone, he might as well be moving. Lovell got up and left the garden. He turned his head at the gate; the monk looked round and waved a farewell hand—his wide white sleeve fell back and floated in the sunny air. “Lots of things up that sleeve!” thought Lovell. “He’ll ‘offer up’ his orange, and get himself some good from it that way. I left it on the seat for him.”

For Lovell had picked up the orange—he didn’t know why; the monk would find it on the seat, and take it in both hands with the same wistful gesture he had had in

bringing it to Lovell. Sentimental! yet in the holiday-state, one could condone such follies; they shed charm on the wise world in which one lived, one's-self. There must be the dear fools to shed the charm. . . . Lovell found that he had sighed. That vexed him; but ever since the monk had turned to him and held out the un-ripened orange which had fallen from the tree, he had been feeling dismal. Days did come, like this one—days on which you were the victim of unreason; and on such days there would seem to be an odious empty sort of “meaning” about everything that happened. You saw symbols, you found metaphors and analogies crawling in your brain. He was seeing and finding such things now—it was a polluted state; the only way was, evidently, to extract some fun from it by seeing how low one *could* fall. This feeling of “out of the garden” was a specimen. He had left the garden of his own accord, because the charm of it was gone and it was nearly time for lunch, yet there was what was crawling in his brain: “We’re out of the garden, she and I; we’re on the dusty high-road.” (It was very dusty in this instance, and the sun was beyond all reason.) That was the sort of imbecility one was subject to; and besides, and even more contemptible, a tendency to dwell upon the fallen orange theme. Off the tree . . . never to ripen now . . . then bruise it, toss it in the dust . . . and the monk winced. But there’s dust in the garden too, then? That was better; that was a retort, not a surrender.

Lovell began to be interested. It seemed that there were two of him, a-making up of metaphors; one really might get some amusement out of that. He walked on, whistling. The dust swirled thick about his feet, but there was dust in the garden too—hadn’t he seen it on the orange? Could he have tossed the orange in the dust,

if it hadn't fallen from the tree? "Without my fault," the monk had said—but there was never any use in trying to assess responsibility. That was a sound unsentimental phrase; and Lovell strolled on, stimulated. The farther he got from the garden, the more rational he felt. Why hadn't the orange had the sense to stay as it was? "If you say," remarked Lovell to the other Lovell, "that nothing can stay as it is, at any rate you won't deny that it could have stayed *where* it was, and altered there, if it must alter."

The other Lovell sighed again, but he was more and more falling behind the real Lovell, which wasn't surprising when one thought how burdened he was with all those ancient tags of sentiment, tradition, and so forth. It was like walking down one's shadow; by the time one reached the hotel, one would be one's own man again . . . and Lovell hurried, kicked up the dust and whistled merrily. Suddenly there drifted into his remembrance something someone wrote:—

"Children, when they're left in darkness,
Fall into a fright;
And they sing a noisy ditty,
In their fear's despite.

I am frightened like the children,
I am singing too . . ."

Heine—some one had translated it. Lovell stopped his whistling. There was Cintra in the distance—Byron's "loveliest village in the world." He was going there again that afternoon, if they could let him have a carriage at the hotel. But there was some big show in Lisbon proper; the commissionaire had warned him that car-

riages might be hard to obtain or that he might have to share one with another visitor. That would be a nuisance, but he'd go to Cintra all the same if there was any sort of vehicle. It would be good to look down again upon the sea from the glittering high-perched white "Our Lady's House of Woe," a convent once, but palace now—why shouldn't one make that into a symbol, since one was in this flaccid state? A House of Woe that turned into a Palace—not the first time that had happened! *His* had turned into a Temple of Peace, at any rate; so had hers, he hoped. "There are symbols and symbols, you see," he said over his shoulder to the other Lovell, now entirely outpaced; and with no more symbols crawling in his brain, the authentic Lovell reached his comfortable hotel.

Lunch was imminent. His place was at the pleasant table by the window; he had succeeded to it in the course of his six weeks. That table possessed, too, the most intelligent of all the waiters; Lovell and he were friends; he should not always let him: "*I want to speak your language,*" Lovell said. . . . He sat down, feeling weary and a little dazed; the sun had been terrific on the uphill walk, but in the room it was subdued to just the right degree, and made delightful shadows: Lovell reckoned them among the pleasures of the lunch-hour. He ordered the egg-entrée (they did wondrous things with eggs), and was considering the next course when the page-boy came to him with letters. That was the sole fault they had here—they carried round the noonday letters when one was in for lunch, as one mostly was. It was part of the management's solicitude; some English women (women, of course!) had stayed a long time recently, the waiter had told Lovell, and always wanted instantly to have their English noonday letters—they used to leave

the dining-room to fetch them from the hall. So the management had started this for everyone; it was as bad as the English newspapers! Lovell hadn't made a fuss; it didn't signify—one need not open letters till one felt inclined, any more than one need read the papers. . . . The boy held the salver to him—quite a number; Lovell took them off, and placed them on one side.

The egg-entrée came, and was a great success; he had ordered his next course by that time—a fish soufflé. Lovell, waiting for it, filled his tall thin glass with wine, and left it there to watch the sun creep into the clear gold. . . . The tiresome mood was gone, but he felt rather at the mercy of events. If things went wrong—if the egg-dish had been nasty, for instance, or the wine flat—he would have been unusually irritable. But all was well so far, and he would trust his luck. His glance fell on the letters, and he took them up to see if any looked amusing. His mother: that would be a long one, it had better wait; the chief—on business, sure to be laconic; that fellow who had offered him an introduction, and never sent it (but one had not wanted it at all); the little niece at Pinner who collected postage-stamps—he mustn't forget that he'd promised to bring her a set; and Grant—Grant . . . Lovell laid the other letters down. He held Grant's in his hand; but he wasn't sure that he was pleased to see Grant's writing. It brought back the mood, in some sort. Grant "knew about" them, or had known in their great days—the only one of Lovell's friends who had. He didn't know about the rupture; he might mention her, for he was in her group, and it wasn't probable that other people had lost sight of her in the amazing way that Lovell had. . . . Grant would make his mention tactfully, if he made any; but did one, now,

desire to hear of her? Since the beginning of her silence, how seldom one *had* heard of her—it was part of the strangeness; it was as though she had escaped before he had, and gone to some far land, like him. She might have—(Lovell for the first time realised it, and it oddly troubled him)—she might have escaped, before he had. That, if he ever came to know it, would demolish the whole Lisbon structure! Lovell smiled at his own childishness—churlishness too; if she *had* got away like him, no matter where or when, he would be truly glad. He could settle the problem of Grant's mention of her, anyhow; but just as he broke the envelope, arrived the dish he had been waiting for. It was covered: "The senhor must eat it *verry* hot," the waiter said.

"Leave the cover on, then," Lovell answered, with a nervous cough that vexed him—but the mood was back: hang Grant! And what a long affair the letter was—how was one to find the place, if it was there? He scanned the first sheet; Grant wrote legibly, thank goodness. Nothing about her there. Now for number two, and peace and the soufflé. The second sheet slipped from his fingers; it fluttered to the ground—the waiter, hovering, retrieved it. "The senhor will not permit the soufflé to grow cold?" he said reproachfully.

. . . Grant had mentioned her. He told, indeed, some news about her, but he wrote in full conviction that his news would not be news; he gave no details; it was a mere comment, sympathetic in Grant's tactful way. Well, she wasn't wondering about him, wasn't looking for him, wasn't angry, wasn't pining—no, not she! She *was* in a far land, an old-and-new land, like himself; she'd never know or care that he had been in Lisbon; she was dead. Lovell looked about the room; the shadows made those pleasant patterns that he'd liked the lunch-hour for

—they kept on making them; they hadn't stopped. The waiter had moved off to other tables; the covered dish still stood there—the soufflé would go cold. Lovell took the cover off, but it fell clashing on the dish again, for he had started violently—someone spoke to him. He turned his head to see who it could be, and whoever it was exclaimed "Senhor!"

"Well, what?" said Lovell, angrily; and then for an instant or two it was all confusion. Yet nothing seemed to have happened, when it quieted down again; the same man who had cried "Senhor!" in that extraordinary way was still beside him. So was the waiter, now; and people were looking—but there was nothing to look at: he was sitting in his chair before the table, and the soufflé was getting cold.

"What is it—what's the matter?" Lovell asked, infuriated, as he had known he would be if anything went wrong.

They wouldn't answer; they kept exchanging looks and murmurs with each other. One was the commissionaire, he remembered now. "Well, what do *you* want?" Lovell said to him, less furiously, although his eyes felt flaming—that sensation: "seeing red." . . . For it was enough to enrage anyone. He sat back firmly in his chair; the sensation in his eyes was dizzying. "What in hell's the matter?" he repeated.

But to the end of time they'd never answer. Lovell got up suddenly. Neither of them said a word; both of them caught hold of him. "Let me go," said Lovell, but they held him fast—they hadn't heard him perhaps; he hardly heard himself. He got away—except for one hand only one, that the silly waiter wouldn't let go; people were staring, naturally. Then again everything vanished; all he could see was a swift enfolding darkness that seemed

fuller of peace than any peace he knew—the blessing of it! but now sounds came into it, faint voices, farther away than anything he'd ever heard; they worried him, for they recalled the Lovell who had once been in the same place *they* were in . . . but they were leagues and leagues away, at all events . . . no, close beside him, and the faces that belonged to them were close, and looked immense.

. . . So he had done a faint, and in the dining-room, with everybody gaping at him! How beastly; but evidently he'd been cleared out of the dining-room, for he was in a room he didn't know at all; there was only one man with him now, and he was saying, in English, that he was a doctor.

"You've had a shock of some kind; lie quite still. You went off for a moment or two, rather badly. Don't try to sit up yet."

Lovell hadn't tried, or if he had, it clearly was a failure. But he would have to sit up, and to stand up, soon, for he must see about getting back to England. He must get back, without delay, to England; he knew that, though he couldn't yet remember why; all he could remember was that that was what he had stood up from the table in the dining-room to do. The doctor seemed to know about this—how he, and someone else, who must have gone out of the room, had discovered it, Lovell couldn't imagine, yet he had heard a voice saying, "Back to England," over and over again. Whose it was, remained a mystery; but since the doctor knew, one might as well explain why one did want to get back, and Lovell could remember that—the words of it, at least; they had stuck in his mind; he'd soon remember what they meant.

"I have to find out when," said Lovell to the doctor.

"When you can go?" the doctor asked him.

"No. When she died," said Lovell.

The doctor was sitting in a chair beside the sofa, watching him. Lovell wondered why he looked so puzzled. "You don't know *when!*" he said. "How's that?"—but then he stopped himself, and said, "All right; you'll soon be able to see about your boat."

Lovell lay looking at him. His face was grave, and still a good deal puzzled.

"You see," began Lovell, "Grant thought I'd have—" But it was hopeless to explain, and he must be getting back to England. He tried again to sit up; the doctor let him this time, but when he did sit up, everything went out of his head. He knew he must get back and ask Grant when; but he couldn't remember why it mattered; for a moment, in the giddiness, it was as if it didn't matter, and would make no difference. . . . But when he could *stand* up, he'd feel better. The giddiness went off; he did stand up; the doctor stood up too, and put one arm about him, and while they stood there, Lovell heard the distant monastery bell ring out the Angelus.

"God," said Lovell, "God, God, God"; and another voice said somewhere, "Yes, that's right—that's better. You've had an awful shock, but now you'll do"; and he was back upon the sofa, and somebody had put into his hand a large clean handkerchief. He wondered why, and looked up at the doctor to find out, but the doctor had turned his back on him.





ELINOR MORDAUNT

© F. A. Swaine

ELINOR MORDAUNT

THE PERFECT WIFE

"And next to him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan . . . and Memucan answered . . . For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes when it shall be reported."

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout."

ALBERT LEVERSON was giving a dinner party. It was the first of June, the anniversary of his wedding-day. This, however, was not the reason for the celebration, but a quite stupendously successful deal upon the Stock Exchange—out of the way, even for Leverson, who had a genius for getting hold of the right thing. The dinner was the direct result of a promise to some of his own particular friends.

"If I pull this off, I'll give all you chaps something like a dinner, and as much fizz as you can get outside of," he had said. And as he did pull it off, in a fashion beyond his wildest dreams, and he could dream—about money—he kept his promise: for he was an honorable man, in some ways.

He had his meannesses—the odd meannesses of a man

with Jewish blood in his veins. But when he wished to make a show there was nothing he would not spend, and money flowed for that dinner party.

Had it not been that he shrank from study of the Bible, he might have read of just such another, where there were "hangings of blue, white and green, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to pillars of marble." Only all the hangings in Levenson's house were festooned with silken cords and tassels, linen was "as nothing accounted of." All the guests "were given to drink of royal wine in abundance," and the guests did—"every man according to his own pleasure."

That other dinner party was also a man's party, and—yes, now I come to think of it, there were other points of similitude which might have warned Levenson, for history repeats itself in small as well as in great ways.

But the very thought of that immortal record of the Jewish race gave Levenson "the creeps." He regarded Christianity as a religion for slaves. He was not without religion; he had his own religion, as we all have. He believed in getting the best out of life, in making a great deal of money and allowing nobody to stand in the way of his profit or his enjoyment.

He was so self-assertive that Glinte, who had studied him for "copy," declared that he realised his own weakness: that anyone who chose to take a high enough hand with Albert could bring him to his knees and keep him there.

"The really strong man has no need to assert himself": that was what he said.

Glinte began his study of the psychology of Albert Levenson in a mood of cynical delight; he left off in a fury of contempt and hatred, burning long and deep beneath a nonchalant surface. For the coolest of us may

be roused—if there is any good in us—when what we hate smirches what we love. From the very first day when Glinte was introduced to Clare Leverson the amusement with which he had regarded her husband began to pale and fade and sicken.

Clare was not expected to be present at the dinner party. Sometimes, very rarely, she asserted herself, being what Leverson—who was accustomed to a meek acquiescence in all he chose to say or do—called “damned nasty.” He had been seen about with a notorious woman of the name of Lucelle Brenton. Someone had told Clare, and he knew it. He tried hard to bully her into a quarrel over the affair. That was one of his grievances against her; she was too poor-spirited even to make a scene. Unlike most men, he rather enjoyed scenes, for they gave him an excuse for bellowing. On this occasion all she said was:

“Well, Albert, I’m sure that Mrs. Brenton suits you admirably.”

This was “damned nasty.” For, though Leverson took the lady in question to the play, dined her at the “Ritz” and the “Carlton,” he had been heard to say that he would not “pick her out of the gutter with a pair of tongs.” This represented the line he chose to draw in such matters.

Again, there was something distinctly nasty about his wife’s way, when he came to an end of his elaborate and detailed directions as to the preparations for this dinner party, of inquiring whether she was expected to be present. She remarked—on being answered in the negative—that she had thought, as it was her wedding-day, the party might possibly be given in her honour.

Leverson jumped on her for this.

“You seem to forget all that was a damned long while

ago, and how damned little I've ever got out of it," he said, reminding her of her crowning sin in not bearing him a son to whom he might leave the house in Lancaster Gate, the vessels of silver and of gold, the richly inlaid and carven, brocade-upholstered, furniture thereof, the pictures by Landseer and Orchardson; the portrait of herself painted by the great Herbert Collis during the first few months of her marriage, which Leverson valued for what it cost, might yet fetch. Collis's were increasing in value, and he personally hated the picture. He declared that it made his wife "look as though she had seen a ghost!" He never harboured the thought that some flesh and blood, of the Leverson type, is far more terrifying than any ghost.

Still, it was characteristic of him that, having been reminded of his wedding-day, he ordered a diamond pendant to be sent to her from the jewellers; declaring that she should have nothing to whine about; that, anyhow, he could feel that he had done the right thing.

She never did whine, never had whined. During the first few years of her married life she had wept many and bitter tears, though Leverson had never seen them. From the very beginning she had realised that he was not the sort of man to be softened by appeals; that he was incapable of realising what more a woman could want than a roof over her head and plenty to eat and drink, smarter clothes, more showy jewellery than any other woman in her set. . . .

She gave in to him about everything, because she felt that she ought to be grateful to him and knew that she was not. She tried by all the means in her power to make up for the shrinking fear which grew and grew upon her. He might have won her at any time, had more than half-won her at their marriage; for beneath her gentle exterior

was a well-spring of warm affection, that might have been turned to passion. She eagerly accepted all kindness, which was really kindness and not just giving. One of her reasons for marrying Albert Leverson had been that she was sorry for him. She believed that he was generous and kind, and that people did not appreciate what she considered his "sterling worth."

For the life of him Leverson could not have said why he married her. Perhaps it was because of those differences which are responsible for so much attraction, perhaps because he thought that he could bully her, perhaps because, at that time, some small tendrils of decency, of faith in what was so intrinsically good, happened to be struggling towards life within him.

He did not even admire her. But many people did, among them that fellow who had painted her portrait, declaring her to be made of the finest womanly material he had ever come across. Perhaps that word "fine"—not as Leverson would have used it—did describe her better than any other: her creamy, flawless skin; her fair brown hair, not in the least golden, but with lights of gold in it; her brown eyes, her slender figure, her sloping shoulders, her hands, her feet, the very way in which her head was set on her neck; her poise, her repose; the diffident fashion in which she hesitated over any assertion of her personal opinions. Though when she made it, she made it with gentle sureness.

She was a splendid housekeeper. This was part of her pride; if she had failed her husband in that one affair of a child—never for a moment had it entered into Leverson's head to wonder how she felt about it—she would at least fulfil every other obligation. She had shown him the menu for the dinner party that night, and even he had no faults to find with it, or with the drilling of

the servants; the exact temperature of the wine, the arrangement of the flowers and lighting were beyond criticism. One of the guests congratulated Leverson on his housekeeper, but apologised when his neighbour nudged him and spoke of a wife.

"I don't suppose that we shall come up into the drawing-room unless Mears takes it into his head to give us a song; but, in any case, you might see that it is well lighted. Leave it clear for us." That was what he had said, there was not the faintest hint that her presence was likely to be required; Leverson himself never even thought of it; or how, or when, or where, she was going to dine. As a matter of fact she had a scrappy dinner on a tray in her boudoir. She had come in just as it was ready and had slipped into a white tea gown, not waiting to dress her hair. Even then she was called away in the middle of her meal to have one last look at the resplendent table.

"I'm sure it looks very nice, Clay," she said to the butler. "I hope your master will be pleased."

Clay looking after her as she left the room, saw her go upstairs a little slowly, one hand on the banisters as though she were tired. She wore white silk stockings and blue brocaded moles beneath her white gown—she was the kind of woman who changes her stockings when she changes her gown, no matter how great a hurry she may be in.

"Old swine!" said Clay to himself, and turning back to his table, surveyed it with much the same sort of pride as that which had whipped on his mistress. Anyhow, there was nothing for "that pig of a Jew" to find fault with. All Leverson's servants always looked on him, spoke of him, in this way, despite the fact that he was constantly declaring himself to be a regular John Bull and talked of "oily Jews" with contempt.

Miles Glinte was invited to the dinner because his books were the rage and Leverson had an idea that he must have plenty of money to invest. He accepted the invitation because he took it for granted Clare would be present, and he would see her. Perhaps he might be able to stand between her and the insults by which his host chose, at times, to distinguish his chattel.

When he saw that it was a man's party he cursed his fate and forced himself to sit it out.

The talk, at first, was all of stocks and shares, or Bulls and Bears. Then, when the guests began to grow mellow, it turned to women. Most of the men were married, and appeared to look upon the hoodwinking of wives, the pursuit of what they called "skirts," as the sport of kings. There were some dozen in all, two or three thin and avid, looking as though they had been fed on dry sandwiches of bank-notes; the rest were puffed with extravagant eating, and drinking exuded prosperity. The man next to Glinte was enormously fat, his purple neck hung in folds over his collar, his eyes protruded. He got horribly drunk and whispered scandalous tales into his neighbour's ear, undeterred by his disgusted silence.

They all boasted of the women they had been intimate with. One or two boasted of their wives, what they were, or had been. . . .

The man who sat next to Glinte—Mears by name—declared that he did not care what a woman was like so long as she had good "understandings"—fine feet and ankles—well-turned legs. . . .

The whole conversation was so gross, so far removed from the human, that Glinte was meditating some excuse for leaving the room when his host's high voice smote upon his ear:

"My wife's not much to look at, darned peaky, pale-

faced, not so young as she used to be, but I'll bet a cool five hundred no man among you's ever seen a neater pair of feet and ankles. Come now!"

They fell upon him at this. They challenged him. They would not let him be. It was as though, in their cups, they regarded the assertion as a sort of personal insult.

"There was a girl at the Gaiety I used to be pals with," hiccoughed one man, who called himself Carsen, "and 'pon my soul water would run under her instep. Take my davy it would!"

"Pooh, that's nothing! There's my wife—I don't say so because she's my wife, mind, but it's God's truth—you might empty a bottle of fizz under each foot at the same time, and it would run through without a check."

"Prove it, prove it!"

"I give you my word of honour."

"Not much good in that; what! do you think us green enough to take that?" They roared at him. "Prove it—prove it, old chap; produce the lady."

"Very well—ver-r-r-i-well—I will." Leverson nodded with the portentous solemnity of a drunken man and beckoned the butler.

"Go upstairs and tell your mistress to step down here for a moment," he said.

Glinte started to his feet, and Leverson caught his eye.

"All right, only a joke, old chap," he began, half shame-facedly; adding truculently: "Hang it all, my own wife! A fellow can do what he likes with his own wife!"

Glinte sat down. He picked up his glass, but he did not raise it to his lips, sat holding it until the stem snapped off in his fingers. It seemed as though his whole being were screwed up to a point of intense anguish. Would Clare—"that jewel in the nose of a swine"—as he

thought of her, consent to make sport for these leering satyrs? . . .

The door reopened. It seemed as though something were stretched across his brain so tightly that the least touch might snap it and he would go mad, then: to his intense relief, he heard Clay's voice:

"The mistress says she cannot come, sir."

No "sorry," no anything—just that! "The mistress says she cannot come." There was relief and triumph in the man's voice.

"Smack in the eye for you, Levenson, old chap! By gad, if my wife kicked up like that I'd let her know the reason why! What about your five hundred now, eh, old cock?"

Levenson started from his seat, his face purple.

"By God, but I'll jolly well make her come," he said, and blundered from the room.

After that there was a silence. The guests filled and refilled their glasses, glancing at each other sideways, with something like shame. Glinte had tipped back his chair a little, gripping the under edge of the table with his fingers. It was intolerable to sit there, helpless, guessing at what was going on. And yet he was man-of-the-world enough to know how easily he might make matters worse for Clare by interference.

Once he thought he heard a cry. A door banged, there was a scuffle on the landing of the stairs, and he started to his feet again. Whatever might come of it he would go to her. An odd chill seemed to have fallen over the room, the disordered table, the guests. Had he had any thought to spare for humour he must have laughed, for every man sat with his mouth open. . . .

Then Levenson reappeared. His face had faded to a sodden grey. He was furiously angry, it was easy to see, but he was also puzzled and frightened.

"Damned obstinate—kittle cattle, these women," he said. "Come on, you chaps, fill up your glasses; then what do you say to some cards?"

"What! she won't come? By gad, Leverson, things are getting to a pretty pass, old man!"

"The vote, by jove! Militant, eh, what?"

"That's what comes of it; women think that they can have it all their own way."

"The damned idiots! Who holds the purse-strings, I'd like to know? Tell me that?"

"Well, one thing's darned certain, I wouldn't have *my* wife get wind of it," said Marks. "By gad, but they would all begin to think they could play the same sorter game."

"Too good for us, I suppose, eh, what!"

"Look pretty if it got about, eh, Leverson?"

"Absolutely refused to come, by God; what's the world coming to? Sorry for you, old chap."

Glinte pushed back his chair. "I'm afraid I must be going, Leverson."

"What—why——?" began the host, then his eyes narrowed in cunning. . . . "Come now—you understand my wife, Glinte, poetry, books, kindred souls, all that—oh, I know! Supposing you see what your persuasive tongue will do, eh? Ask her to come down here for a minute, just a minute, give us the pleasure of her company, what?"

For a moment Glinte hesitated; then he nodded and went out of the room.

He went upstairs to the boudoir and found Clare sitting by the fire. She was deadly white, her eyes strained with unshed tears. One of her loose sleeves was turned back and her hand clasped round it. There were crimson marks around her wrists. Her hair was disordered.

For a moment or so Glinte stood and looked down at her, while she gazed up into his face.

"Don't mind. It doesn't matter, nothing can make any difference now," she said at last; and Glinte—with a lump in his throat which forbade words—dropped to one knee, lifted the hem of her skirt and pressed it to his lips: then turned and left the room, passed downstairs, across the hall, and out of the front door, slamming it behind him.

"Well, I be damned!—but you're a soft 'un!" one of Leverson's guests had exclaimed when Glinte left the room. Upon which their host, glancing round at them all with an expressive stare, had winked. "I'll pay her out, you see," he said. "Albert Leverson's not the sort of chap to sit down under anything, you take my oath on that."

Three months later Leverson sued his wife for a divorce and named Miles Glinte as co-respondent.

They had known quite well what he was after. They loved each other, but there had been no love-making between them. They had met constantly, however, been seen about together lunching in quiet little restaurants, sitting under the trees in the park. Clare had been far too proud to attempt the slightest concealment, as she was too proud to defend herself. Besides, why should she give Leverson that sort of satisfaction?

He had counted upon defence and pleadings, pleasant scenes with his wife upon her knees; but he was disappointed. His one hope, now, was that Glinte might not choose to marry her. For he knew, none better, how very little there had ever been between them.

However, the case ran its course and he won it. For adultery is one crime in which guilt is presupposed unless the alternative be proved; while innocence is never sup-

posed at all, though the other suppositions and conclusions might well amaze a Turk.

Clare and her late husband met, face to face, just as they were leaving the court. For a moment she hesitated, then put out her hand. "Let us part friends, Albert. I am sure I—I have no reason to bear you any sort of a grudge; and I only hope, I do indeed hope, that you will be able to find someone to make you happy—happier than I was ever able to do."

Eight months after his degree was made absolute Levenson married again, Lily D'Esterre, a girl out of a beauty chorus, what he described as a good girl; a girl "with some real flesh and blood, warmth about her"; a girl who he felt sure would make a splendid mother. This was because of her full-breasted, voluptuous figure. She was very fair, one of those pink and gold and blue women men like Levenson admire. She had a small, straight nose. No one, in their senses, could have suspected one single drop of Hebrew blood in her veins.

In his own way Levenson was very much in love. He loaded his bride with presents, new things, in addition to all Clare's jewelry, which she had left. He took her for their honeymoon to Monte Carlo. When he married his first wife he had declared that it was impossible to spare time for anything more than a single week at Brighton.

But there was something faintly pathetic in his attitude at this time. Clare's kindness to him over that divorce, which he realised belittled him; all he had heard of her happiness—for she married Glinte the very day after she was free—bewildered him. She had left Levenson with no one very special in view, with a strange feeling of being, somehow or other, defrauded, and this unusual sensation had inclined him to give in to this new wife of his, and treat her with indulgence, almost with considera-

tion. It was, indeed, as though a tiny prick had been made in the man's immense bubble of self-esteem and greed.

When they got home to the house in Lancaster Gate he gave a series of dinner parties, mostly to men; for he knew no reputable women. He had never met any of his former wife's friends. There was no question of Lily being shut away from these gaities. After a while, indeed, it began to occur to her husband that it was she who was the attraction, the magnet which drew his friends; that his invitations had never been more popular, more sought after; though his dinners were far less well chosen than they had been; while the whole service had deteriorated since Clay left and took service—and here was another sting—with the Miles Glintes.

The fun was, as often as not, uproarious. Lily sang to them, toasted them, chaffed them, rallied them; would not allow a single man to sit silent or appear indifferent. Once she stood on a chair to sing—a sort of song which would have been more suitable to Mrs. Brenton than to Levenson's wife—as he felt she ought to be. Once again there was some talk of ankles, feet, and she tipped back her chair, flung one foot on the table, with a laughing: "There!"

She was very proud of her feet and legs. It gave Albert an odd pinched feeling to realise, as he could not help but do, that they were inferior to Clare's. . . .

Still, what Lily lost in quality she made up for in generosity. Sometimes he thought, with bitterness, that there was nothing in the world that she would not exhibit to any one of his men friends.

Again and again he remonstrated with her on her low-cut dresses. One was cut down almost to the waist at the back, and when he found fault she laughed, told him that

she would put it on the other way about next time; and did so—with results that made even Leverson blush.

“My word, but she’s a hot ’un, that new wife of yours, old chap,” said Mears; and Leverson was so furious that he cut him next time they met. One by one he dropped his old friends for the reason that Lily was the sort of woman who led on every man she met to some insolent familiarity. But even after most of Leverson’s friends had gone they were not lonely, for there were still plenty of Lily’s own friends, not to speak of relations. . . .

The first time they met Leverson had held forth on the subject of Jews. Lily was shrewd; he knew that she was an orphan, that she had been brought up by a cousin: she left it at that.

It was not until they had been married some months, until she had the whip-hand of him, that she produced her relatives. Then they came in streams—headed by “Cousin Mordy.”

Lily had no very ardent affection for her husband; she would have made a good mother, but there was no sign of a child, and for this she had the audacity to blame Leverson.

“I’m sure all my people have large enough families,” she declared—with painful veracity.

Outwardly voluptuous, she was sexually cold. She just loved flirtations—“ragging about with men”: was “out for fun” totally lacking in all reticence and modesty: but that was all.

She was indeed, as Leverson had once said, “a good girl”; and in more than the accepted meaning of the word, for she was loyal and faithful to everyone who had befriended her in the old, not too easy days. She was intensely clannish; and this was in her blood, along with many other characteristics of that hated race which

Leverson realised the moment that he sat eyes upon her foster-father, Cousin Mordy; and her second cousins, really her contemporaries, Joseph, and Oscar and Samuel, Judith and Sara, who had been like brothers and sisters to her.

Lily was a "sport," quite unlike any one of them. They all laughed at her, her fairness, her funny little nose . . . even, in their jolly, affectionate way, went to the length of some rather doubtful jokes regarding their Aunt Naomi and a certain "gentleman friend," who had been a Christian. Not that they meant anything by it, for they were intensely moral.

Her very name had been chosen as appropriate to her fair skin and hair, blue eyes. It was not that by which she had been registered; though at this time they had all pretty well forgotten the fact. Leverson, too, had failed to realise her signature after their marriage.

From the very beginning he hated Cousin Mordy and his family, with a bitter hatred, which grew and grew until it shut out the whole of the rest of the world. It came between him and his business. That most awful of all feelings oppressed him; the realisation of a lost God. Where was the use of money when it could not rid him of Cousin Mordy and Co.? What was the good of the house in Lancaster Gate when it was forever full of those "filthy Jews"? What was the good of buying things when he had no one to leave them to? What—and here the odd, crude simplicity which is mingled with the guile of his kind came into play—was the good of so much flesh and blood in the way of a wife, when she could not, or would not, bear children?

He told Lily that he would not have her people forever hanging about the place, and she only laughed at him. He declared that he had not a single moment's peace in

his own house—when nobody happened to be dancing or singing, or reciting, the gramophone was squawking out some unutterable tune, and some of Lily's small third cousins were playing bears in the hall, or shrieking on the stairs—and was reminded of his own "study," a dark little den at the back of the dining-room. The boudoir was turned into a bedroom for Judith, who came to keep Lily company.

"What's the good of a boudoir, sitting moping by oneself?—that was what Lily said. It seemed impossible to believe that there had been a time when every room in the house, save that same boudoir and one bedroom—and he had even claimed his share in that—belonged to the master of the house, and was at the entire disposal of himself and his friends.

Joseph and Samuel were married, and they brought their wives, and their children, with dirty, sticky fingers, and shrill voices, the leg of one drawer always a little lower than the other. Oscar was unmarried and he brought his friends—young men with immense noses and an unchanging flow of spirits, who put in their time making love to Lily. Then there were Judith's admirers, curled and scented like an Assyrian bull, who seemed to overflow on to Lily. It was almost impossible to woo the one without the other, for the cousins habitually went about with their arms round each other's waists. Sara was married and had a blackguard of a husband and six children, whom Leverson, through his wife, practically kept.

"Where was the good of my marrying if I'm not to be allowed to give my own people a good time?" was her only and usual reply to her husband's remonstrances.

He tried swearing at her as he had sworn at Clare; but

she had heard that sort of thing before, was impervious to it.

Then came a time when Cousin Mordy declared that he was so lonely that he must have dear Judith back to live with him. Lily could not bear the thought of this. But still she saw that it was hard on her cousin, and thus compounded with him; so that one evening, when Leverson got back from the city, he found the old man installed as permanent inmate.

There was a great scene between him and his wife; a scene which, in the old days, might have given him real pleasure; but he seemed to have lost his taste for everything in the way of enjoyment.

Lily was a very good-tempered woman. Generally speaking, she did not "care a hang what people said"; these were her own words. But what Leverson said about her friends and relations, above all about her dearly loved Cousin Mordy, was beyond bearing and she told her husband what she thought of him. She made so much noise—more noise than Leverson, which of course spoilt the whole thing so far as he was concerned—that the entire household gathered to the fray. Judith and her young man, who had been flirting in the tiny conservatory on the stairs, took part in it; Oscar and his friends, who were trying the new pianola; even the servants joined in.

Cousin Mordy was bewildered. He could not understand what it was all about. When Leverson ordered him out of the house he clung to Lily like a child, and wept. He wore a very long frock coat; which was almost a gaberdine. Lily lifted one corner of it to dry his eyes for him. He said that he would pack his things and shake the dust of his father's-brother's-child's-husband's-house from off his feet; and the curse of God would be upon

the man for his cruelty to the more than father of the wife of his bosom: alone, childless and accursed should he remain to the day of his death.

Old Cousin Mordy might be meek, but he was shrewd, and that word "childless" got home.

Then Lily delivered her ultimatum. If Cousin Mordy went she would go too.

"Look queer, wouldn't it?" she said, "if you sorter got into the habit of having wives who couldn't put up with you? Poor darling!" she fondled Cousin Mordy's hands as she had never fondled Leverson's. "You're dead cold, and no wonder. Come in here and I'll get you a drop of something." Then she drew him into her husband's "study."

Aunt Rhoda, who had borrowed the drawing-room for a tea-party, returned to her friends—who had been hanging over the banisters. Oscar and his circle went back to the pianola, which was in the dining-room. Judith and her lover retired, once more, to the conservatory. Lily was comforting her ancient cousin with her husband's fine old Cognac in what was, supposedly, his own special sanctum. . . .

Sadly and slowly the master of the house made his way upstairs, past the sunny room with the barred windows—which the last tenants had used as a nursery—where three of Sara Isaacson's children hung over the gramophone, turned on to *Stop ye ticklin', Jock*.

Mrs. Isaacson's nurse was talking to one of the Leverson servants, just within the door. "I'm glad as how she spoke up. A shame it was, that poor old simpleton as never did nobody any harm."

"Well, he got his way with his last wife, and he'll get it with this one—I don't think!" remarked the other; and they both tittered.

Up in his own room Leverson lay down on his bed and turned his face to the wall.

The dinner-gong sounded and he rose, washed his hands and face and tidied his hair—he had given up dressing for dinner—and went downstairs. There was no reason why he should not eat in his own house, he supposed, morosely.

Lily heard him coming, ran out of the drawing-room, and slipped her arm through his.

“Come along, old dear. Let bygones be bygones; we’ll all shake down after a bit, mark my words for it. And here’s Cousin Mordy ready to forget and forgive.”

Yes, Cousin Mordy was ready, ready and willing. He insisted upon going downstairs on Leverson’s arm and sitting by his side. From this point of vantage he gave him many tips upon what he supposed to be “good things”; and tried to persuade him to mark his reconciliation with Lily by the gift of a diamond necklace—which he, Mordy Stein, had a chance of selling upon commission.

His business proposals were so pettifogging, so childish, that they made Leverson writhe. As to the necklace, for the sake of peace, he promised to think it over.

Cousin Mordy’s long, greasy black curls, of which he was inordinately proud, for they were without a touch of grey, hung down the side of his face into his spoon as he gobbled his soup. . . .

Lily was talking of clothes. “A red coat-frock with a patent leather belt. I like a bit o’ colour myself, it livens things up.”

One Sunday morning a month later, three groups might have been seen converging upon each other down

three paths in Kensington Gardens. It was a brilliant summer day, the flower beds were set like rare enamels in an expanse of radiant green. The air was full of the song of birds.

One group—if it might be so called—consisted of nothing more than a nurse in a white dress, pushing a white perambulator. The other of a single lady and gentleman, the lady dressed in flowing grey chiffon, carrying a grey parasol.

The third party poured itself out over the whole width of the main path. There were several young men in frock coats and top hats, a young lady in a very tight pink gown, sundry children, an elderly lady or two; while there was something so gay and luscious about the whole party that it could not but remind the onlooker of a lavish display of cheap sweets, shot from a barrel, banked up against the glass in front of a confectioner's window.

At the tail end of this group walked a stout, sallow-faced man, who for all his stoutness seemed to sag down a trifle in his good clothes and who looked sullen and melancholy. At his right hand, clinging to his arm, was an elderly Jew, who had taken off his hat to enjoy the breeze or show his curls. This person was turning his head from side to side, smiling with childish eagerness and enjoyment. At his left hand was a stout, fair woman, who also smiled. She was attired in a crimson coat-frock with a patent leather belt, a crimson hat with feathers shading from ruby to pale pink.

The two smaller groups met first: the lady in grey gave a little cry of delight, the nurse drew up, and she bent over the child in the perambulator; while her companion stood by and gazed down at them both with a proprietary air of admiration and pleasure.

The larger party approached, flowed round them, and passed on at either side.

The stout, sullen man was driven close against the perambulator. He saw the baby first, of a creamy fairness, with wide, brown eyes, and a crest of fair hair, very upright among its cushions. Its mother, unmistakably its mother, was still bending over it; but at that very moment she raised herself, straightened her back, and the two who had once been husband and wife were face to face! For one moment they gazed into each other's eyes. She looked very well and pretty. Leverson had never seen her with such a colour; there could be no two opinions on her beauty. She looked at him kindly, with no trace of animosity or embarrassment. Then she opened her lips; it seemed that she was going to speak, when the man gave a sudden lurch sideways. . . .

Sara Isaacson's youngest had caught him round his ankle with the hook of her mother's parasol and was shrieking aloud with joy.

"Got yer there, Uncle Bert."

Clare Glinde bent again over her baby, then turned and walked away by her husband's side.

"I was always sorry for him, *always*, even when I was most frightened, and now—oh, my dear, I know why. He was—oh, he always *must* have been—so really futile."

OLIVER ONIONS

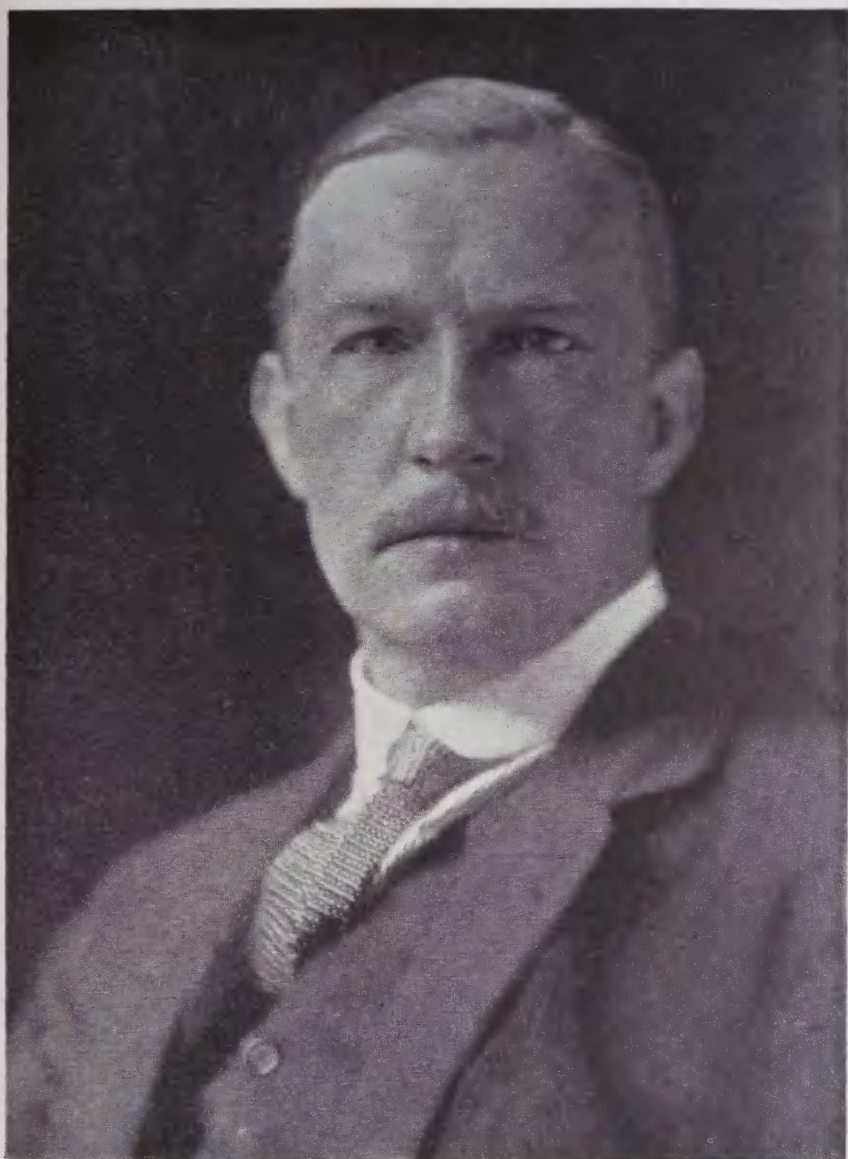
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As the young man put his hand to the uppermost of the four brass bell-knobs to the right of the fanlighted door he paused, withdrew the hand again, and then pulled at the lowest knob. The sawing of bell-wire answered him, and he waited for a moment, uncertain whether the bell had rung, before pulling again. Then there came from the basement a single cracked stroke; the head of a maid appeared in the whitewashed area below; and the head was withdrawn as apparently the maid recognised him. Steps were heard along the hall; the door was opened; and the maid stood aside to let him enter, the apron with which she had slipped the latch still crumpled in her greasy hand.

"Sorry, Daisy," the young man apologised, "but I didn't want to bring her down all those stairs. How is she? Has she been out to-day?"

The maid replied that the person spoken of had been out; and the young man walked along the wide carpeted passage.

It was cumbered like an antique-shop with alabaster busts on pedestals, dusty palms in faience vases, and trophies of spears and shields and assegais. At the foot of the stairs was a rustling portière of strung beads, and beyond it the carpet was continued up the broad, easy



OLIVER ONIONS

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From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

flight, secured at each step by a brass rod. Where the stairs made a turn, the fading light of the December afternoon, made still dimmer by a window of decalcomanied glass, shone on a cloudy green aquarium with fallow goldfish, a number of cacti on a shabby console table, and a large and dirty white sheepskin rug. Passing along a short landing, the young man began the ascent of the second flight. This also was carpeted, but with a carpet that had done duty in some dining- or bedroom before being cut up into strips of the width of the narrow space between the wall and the handrail. Then, as he still mounted, the young man's feet sounded loud on oilcloth; and when he finally paused and knocked at a door it was on a small landing of naked boards beneath the cold gleam of the skylight above the well of the stairs.

"Come in," a girl's voice called.

The room he entered had a low sagging ceiling on which shone a glow of firelight, making colder still the patch of eastern sky beyond the roofs and the cowls and hoods of chimneys framed by the square of the single window. The glow on the ceiling was reflected dully in the old dark mirror over the mantelpiece. An open door in the farther corner, hampered with skirts and blouses, allowed a glimpse of a girl's bedroom.

The young man set the paper bag he carried down on the littered round table and advanced to the girl who sat in an old wicker chair before the fire. She did not turn her head as he kissed her cheek, and he looked down at something that had muffled the sound of his steps as he had approached her.

"Hallo, that's new, isn't it, Bessie? Where did that come from?" he asked cheerfully.

The middle of the floor was covered with a common

jute matting, but on the hearth was a magnificent leopard-skin rug.

"Mrs. Hepburn sent it up. There was a draught from under the door. It's much warmer for my feet."

"Very kind of Mrs. Hepburn. Well, how are you feeling to-day, old girl?"

"Better, thanks, Ed."

"That's the style. You'll be yourself again soon. Daisy says you've been out to-day?"

"Yes, I went for a walk. But not far; I went to the Museum and then sat down. You're early, aren't you?"

He turned away to get a chair, from which he had to move a mass of tissue-paper patterns and buckram linings. He brought it to the rug.

"Yes. I stopped last night late to cash up for Vedder, so he's staying to-night. Turn and turn about. Well, tell us all about it, Bess."

Their faces were red in the firelight. Hers had the prettiness that the first glance almost exhausts, the prettiness, amazing in its quantity, that one sees for a moment under the light of the street lamps when shops and offices close for the day. She was short-nosed, pulpy-mouthed and faunish-eyed, and only the rather remarkable smallness of the head on the splendid thick throat saved her from ordinariness. He, too, might have been seen in his thousands at the close of any day, hurrying home to Catford or Walham Green or Tufnell Park to tea and an evening with a girl or in a billiard-room, or or else dining cheaply "up West" preparatory to smoking cigarettes from yellow packets in the upper circle of a music-hall. Four inches of white up-and-down collar encased his neck; and as he lifted his trousers at the knee to clear his purple socks, the pair of paper covers showed that had protected his cuffs during the day at the office.

He removed them, crumpled them up and threw them on the fire; and the momentary addition to the light of the upper chamber showed how curd-white was that superb neck of hers and how moody and tired her eyes.

From his face only one would have guessed, and guessed wrongly, that his preferences were for billiard-rooms and music-halls. His conversation showed them to be otherwise. It was of Polytechnic classes that he spoke, and of the course of lectures in English literature that had just begun. And, as if somebody had asserted that the pursuit of such studies was not compatible with a certain measure of physical development also, he announced that he was not sure that he should not devote, say, half an evening a week, on Wednesdays, to training in the gymnasium.

"Mens sana in corpore sano, Bessie," he said; "a sound mind in a sound body, you know. That's tremendously important, especially when a fellow spends the day in a stuffy office. Yes, I think I shall give it half Wednesdays, from eight-thirty to nine-thirty; sends you home in a glow. But I was going to tell you about the Literature Class. The second lecture's to-night. The first was splendid, all about the languages of Europe and Asia—what they call the Indo-Germanic languages, you know. Aryans. I can't tell you exactly without my notes, but the Hindoos and Persians, I think it was, they crossed the Himalaya Mountains and spread westward somehow, as far as Europe. That was the way it all began. It was splendid, the way the lecturer put it. English is a Germanic language, you know. Then came the Celts. I wish I'd brought my notes. I see you've been reading; let's look——"

A book lay on her knees, its back warped by the heat of the fire. He took it and opened it.

"Ah, Keats! Glad you like Keats, Bessie. We needn't be great readers, but its important that what we do read should be all right. I don't know him, not *really* know him, that is. But he's quite all right—A1 in fact. And he's an example of what I've always maintained, that knowledge should be brought within the reach of all. It just shows. He was the son of a livery-stable keeper, you know, so what he'd have been if he'd really had chances, been to universities and so on, there's no knowing. But, of course, it's more from the historical standpoint that I'm studying these things. Let's have a look——"

He opened the book where a hairpin between the leaves marked a place. The firelight glowed on the page, and he read, monotonously and inelastically :

*"And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers; the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley
To scare thee, Melancholy!"*

It was the wondrous passage from *Endymion*, of the descent of the wild inspired rabble into India. Ed plucked for a moment at his lower lip, and then, with a "Hm! What's it all about, Bessie?" continued :

*"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;*

*And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass,
Tipsily quaffing."*

"H'm! I see. Mythology. That's made up of tales, and myths, you know. Like Odin and Thor and those, only, those were Scandinavian Mythology. So it would be absurd to take it too seriously. But I think, in a way, things like that do harm. You see," he explained, "the more beautiful they are the more harm they might do. We ought always to show virtue and vice in their true colours, and if you look at it from that point of view this is just drunkenness. That's rotten; destroys your body and intellect; as I heard a chap say once, it's an insult to the beasts to call it beastly. I joined the Blue Ribbon when I was fourteen and I haven't been sorry for it yet. No. Now there's Vedder; he 'went off on a bend,' as he calls it, last night, and even he says this morning it wasn't worth it. But let's read on."

Again he read, with unresilient movement:

*"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine wreath crown!
I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce!
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans. . . ."*

"Hm! He was a Buddhist god, Brahma was; mythology again. As I say, if you take it seriously, it's just glorifying intoxication. But I say; I can hardly see.

Better light the lamp. We'll have tea first, then read. No, you sit still; I'll get it ready; I know where things are——"

He rose, crossed to a little cupboard with a sink in it, filled the kettle at the tap, and brought it to the fire. Then he struck a match and lighted the lamp.

The cheap glass shade was of a foolish corolla shape, clear glass below, shading to pink, and deepening to red at the crimped edge. It gave a false warmth to the spaces of the room above the level of the mantelpiece, and Ed's figure, as he turned the regulator, looked from the waist upwards as if he stood within that portion of a spectrum screen that deepens to the band of red. The bright concentric circles that spread in rings of red on the ceiling were more dimly reduplicated in the old mirror over the mantelpiece; and the wintry eastern light beyond the chimney-hoods seemed suddenly almost to die out.

Bessie, her white neck below the level of the lampshade, had taken up the book again; but she was not reading. She was looking over it at the upper part of the grate. Presently she spoke.

"I was looking at some of those things this afternoon, at the Museum."

He was clearing from the table more buckram linings and patterns of paper, numbers of *Myra's Journal* and *The Delineator*. Already on his way to the cupboard he had put aside a red-bodied dressmaker's "shape" of wood and wire.

"What things?" he asked.

"Those you were reading about. Greek, aren't they?"

"Oh, the Greek room! . . . But those people, Bacchus and those, weren't people in the ordinary sense. Gods and goddesses, most of 'em; Bacchus was a god. That's what mythology means. I wish sometimes our course

took in Greek literature, but it's a dead language after all. German's more good in modern life. It would be nice to know everything, but one has to select, you know. Hallo, I clean forgot; I brought you some grapes, Bessie; here they are, in this bag; we'll have 'em after tea, what?"

"But," she said again after a pause, still looking at the grate, "they had their priests and priestesses, and followers and people, hadn't they? It was their things I was looking at—combs and brooches and hairpins, and things to cut their nails with. They're all in a glass case there. And they had safety-pins, exactly like ours."

"Oh, they were a civilised people," said Ed cheerfully. "It all gives you an idea. I only hope you didn't tire yourself out. You'll soon be all right, of course, but you have to be careful yet. We'll have a clean tablecloth, shall we?"

She had been seriously ill; her life had been despaired of; and somehow the young Polytechnic student seemed anxious to assure her that she was now all right again, or soon would be. They were to be married "as soon as things brightened up a bit," and he was very much in love with her. He watched her head and neck as he continued to lay the table, and then, as he crossed once more to the cupboard, he put his hand lightly in passing on her hair.

She gave so quick a start that he too started. She must have been very deep in her reverie to have been so taken by surprise.

"I say, Bessie, don't jump like that!" he cried with involuntary quickness. Indeed, had his hand been red-hot, or ice-cold, or taloned, she could not have turned a more startled, even frightened, face to him.

"It was your touching me," she muttered, resuming her gazing into the grate.

He stood looking anxiously down on her. It would

have been better not to discuss her state, and he knew it; but in his anxiety he forgot it.

"That jumpiness is the effect of your illness, you know."

She was not pleased that he should speak of her "oddness." For that matter, she, too, found him "odd"—at any rate, found it difficult to realise that he was as he always had been. He had begun to irritate her a little. His club-footed reading of the verses had irritated her, and she had tried hard to hide from him that his cocksure opinions and the tone in which they were pronounced jarred on her. It was not that she was "better" than he, "knew" any more than he did, didn't (she supposed) love him still the same; these moods, that dated from her illness, had nothing to do with those things; she reproached herself sometimes that she was subject to such doldrums.

"It's all right, Ed, but please don't touch me just now," she said.

He was in the act of leaning over her chair, but he saw her shrink, and refrained.

"Poor old girl!" he said sympathetically. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know. It's awfully stupid of me to be like this, but I can't help it. I shall be better soon if you leave me alone."

"Nothing's happened, has it?"

"Only those silly dreams I told you about."

"Bother the dreams!" muttered the Polytechnic student.

During her illness she had had dreams, and had come to herself at intervals to find Ed or the doctor, Mrs. Hepburn or her aunt bending over her. These kind, solicitous faces had been no more than a glimpse, and then she had gone off into the dreams again. The curious thing had

been that the dreams had seemed to be her vivid waking life, and the other things—the anxious faces, the details of her dingy bedroom, the thermometer under her tongue—had been the dream. And, though she had come back to actuality, the dreams had never quite vanished. She could remember no more of them than that they had seemed to hold a high singing and jocundity, issuing from some region of haze and golden light; and they seemed to hover, ever on the point of being recaptured, yet ever eluding all her mental efforts. She was living now between reality and a vision.

She had fewer words than sensations, and it was a little pitiful to hear her vainly striving to make clear what she meant.

“It’s so queer,” she said. “It’s like being on the edge of something—a sort of tiptoe—I can’t describe it. Sometimes I could almost touch it with my hand, and then it goes away, but never *quite* away. It’s like something just past the corner of my eye, over my shoulder, and I sit very still sometimes, trying to take it off its guard. But the moment I move my head it moves too—like this——”

Again he gave a quick start at the suddenness of her action. Very stealthily her faunish eyes had stolen sideways, and then she had swiftly turned her head.

“Here, I say, don’t, Bessie!” he cried nervously. “You look awfully uncanny when you do that! You’re brooding,” he continued, “that’s what you’re doing, brooding. You’re getting into a low state. You want bucking up. I don’t think I shall go to the Polytec. to-night; I shall stay and cheer you up. You know, I really don’t think you’re making an effort, darling.”

His last words seemed to strike her. They seemed to fit in with something of which she too was conscious. “Not making an effort . . .” she wondered how he knew

that. She felt in some vague way that it was important that she *should* make an effort.

For, while her dream ever evaded her, and yet never ceased to call her with such a voice as he who reads on a magic page of the calling of elves hears stilly in his brain, yet somehow behind the seduction was another and a sterner voice. There was warning as well as fascination. Beyond that edge at which she strained on tiptoe, mingled with the jocund calls to Hasten, Hasten, were deeper calls that bade her Beware. They puzzled her. Beware of what? Of what danger? And to whom? . . .

"How do you mean, I'm not making an effort, Ed?" she asked slowly, again looking into the fire, where the kettle now made a gnat-like singing.

"Why, an effort to get all right again. To be as you used to be—as, of course, you will be soon."

"As I *used* to be?" The words came with a little check in her breathing.

"Yes, before all this. To be yourself, you know."

"Myself?"

"All jolly, and without these jerks and jumps. I wish you could get away. A fortnight by the sea would do you all the good in the world."

She knew not what it was in the words "the sea" that caused her suddenly to breathe more deeply. The sea! . . . It was as if, by the mere uttering of them, he had touched some secret spring, brought to fulfilment some spell. What had he meant by speaking of the sea? . . . A fortnight before, had somebody spoken to her of the sea it would have been the sea of Margate, of Brighton, of Southend, that, supplying the image that a word calls up as if by conjuration, she would have seen before her; and what other image could she supply, could she *possibly* supply, now? . . . Yet she did, or almost did, supply one.

What new experience had she had, or what old, old one had been released in her? With that confused, joyous dinning just beyond the range of physical hearing there had suddenly mingled a new illusion of sound—a vague, vast pash and rustle, silky and harsh both at once, its tireless voice holding meanings of stillness and solitude compared with which the silence that is mere absence of sound was vacancy. It was part of her dream, invisible, intangible, inaudible, yet there. As if he had been an enchanter, it had come into being at the word upon his lips. Had he other such words? Had he the Master Word that—(ah, she knew what the Master Word would do!)—would make the Vision the Reality and the Reality the Vision? Deep within her she felt something—her soul, herself, she knew not what—thrill and turn over and settle again. . . .

“The sea,” she repeated in a low voice.

“Yes, that’s what you want to set you up—rather! Do you remember that fortnight at Littlehampton, you and me and your aunt? Jolly that was! I like Littlehampton. It isn’t flash like Brighton, and Margate’s always so beastly crowded. And do you remember that afternoon by the windmill? I did love you that afternoon, Bessie!” . . .

He continued to talk, but she was not listening. She was wondering why the words “the sea” were somehow part of it all—the pins and brooches of the Museum, the book on her knees, the dream. She remembered a game of hide-and-seek she had played as a child, in which cries of “Warm, warm, warmer!” had announced the approach to the hidden object. Oh, she was getting warm—positively hot. . . .

He had ceased to talk, and was watching her. Perhaps it was the thought of how he had loved her that afternoon

by the windmill that had brought him close to her chair again. She was aware of his nearness, and closed her eyes for a moment as if she dreaded something. Then she said quickly, "Is tea nearly ready, Ed?" and, as he turned to the table, took up the book again.

She felt that even to touch that book brought her "warmer." It fell open at a page. She did not hear the clatter Ed made at the table, nor yet the babble his words had evoked, of the pierrots and banjos and minstrels of Margate and Littlehampton. It was to hear a gladder, wilder tumult that she sat once more so still, so achingly listening. . . .

*"The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din——"*

The words seemed to move on the page. In her eyes another light than the firelight seemed to play. Her breast rose, and in her thick white throat a little inarticulate sound twanged.

"Eh? Did you speak, Bessie?" Ed asked, stopping in his buttering of bread.

"Eh? . . . No."

In answering, her head had turned for a moment, and she had seen him. Suddenly it struck her with force: what a shaving of a man he was! Desk-chested, weak-necked, conscious of his little "important" lip and chin—yes, he needed a Polytechnic gymnastic course! Then she remarked how once, at Margate, she had seen him in the distance, as in a hired baggy bathing-dress he had bathed from a machine, in muddy water, one of a hundred others, all rather cold, flinging a polo-ball about and shouting stridently. "A sound mind in a sound body!" . . . He was rather vain of his neat shoes, too, and doubtless

stunted his feet; and she had seen the little spot on his neck caused by the chafing of his collar-stud. . . . No, she did not want him to touch her, just now at any rate. His touch would be too like a betrayal of another touch . . . somewhere, sometime, somehow . . . in that tantalising dream that refused to allow itself either to be fully remembered or quite forgotten. What *was* that dream? *What* was it? . . .

She continued to gaze into the fire.

Of a sudden she sprang to her feet with a choked cry of almost animal fury. The fool *had* touched her. Carried away doubtless by the memory of that afternoon by the windmill, he had, in passing once more to the kettle, crept softly behind her and put a swift burning kiss on the side of her neck.

Then he had retreated before her, stumbling against the table and causing the cups and saucers to jingle.

The basket-chair tilted up, but righted itself again.

"I told you—I told you—" she choked, her stockish finger shaking with rage, "I told you—you——"

He put up his elbow as if to ward off a blow.

"*You* touched me—*you!*—*you!*" the words broke from her.

He had put himself farther round the table. He stammered.

"Here—dash it all, Bessie—what *is* the matter?"

"*You* touched me!"

"All right," he said sullenly. "I won't touch you again—no fear. I didn't know you were such a firebrand. All right, drop it now. I won't again. Good Lord!"

Slowly the white fist she had drawn back sank to her side again.

"All right now," he continued to grumble resentfully.

"You needn't take on so. It's said—I won't touch you

again." Then, as if he remembered that after all she was ill and must be humoured, he began, while her bosom still rose and fell rapidly, to talk with an assumption that nothing much had happened. "Come, sit down again, Bessie. The tea's in the pot and I'll have it ready in a couple of jiffs. What a ridiculous little girl you are, to take on like that! . . . And I say, listen! That's a muffin-bell, and there's a grand fire for toast! You sit down while I run out and get 'em. Give me your key, so I can let myself in again——"

He took her key from her bag, caught up his hat, and hastened out.

But she did not sit down again. She was no calmer for his quick disappearance. In that moment when he had recoiled from her she had had the expression of some handsome and angered snake, its hood puffed, ready to strike. She stood dazed; one would have supposed that that ill-advised kiss of his had indeed been the Master Word she sought, the Word she felt approaching, the Word to which the objects of the Museum, the book, that rustle of a sea she had never seen, had been but the ever "warming" stages. Some merest trifle stood between her and those elfin cries, between her and that thin golden mist in which faintly seen shapes seemed to move—shapes almost of tossed arms, waving, brandishing objects strangely all-but familiar. That roaring of the sea was *not* the rushing of her own blood in her ears, that rosy flush *not* the artificial glow of the cheap red lamp-shade. The shapes were almost as plain as if she saw them in some clear but black mirror, the sounds almost as audible as if she heard them through some not very thick muffling. . . .

"Quick—the book," she muttered.

But even as she stretched out her hand for it, again

came that solemn sound of warning. As if something sought to stay it, she had deliberately to thrust her hand forward. Again the high dinning calls of "Hasten! Hasten!" were mingled with that deeper "Beware!" She knew in her soul that, once over that terrible edge, the Dream would become the Reality and the Reality the Dream. She knew nothing of the fluidity of the thing called Personality—not a thing at all, but a state, a balance, a relation, a resultant of forces so delicately in equilibrium that a touch, and —*pff!*—the horror of Formlessness rushed over all.

As she hesitated a new light appeared in the chamber. Within the frame of the small square window, beyond the ragged line of the chimney-cowls, an edge of orange brightness showed. She leaned forward. It was the moon, rusty and bloated and flattened by the earth-mist.

The next moment her hand had clutched at the book.

*"Whence came ye, merry Damsels! Whence came ye
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate?
'We follow Bacchus, Bacchus on the wing
A-conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! Good or ill betide
We dance before him through kingdoms wide!
Come hither, Lady fair, and joinèd be
To our wild minstrelsy!'"*

There was an instant in which darkness seemed to blot out all else; then it rolled aside, and in a blaze of brightness was gone. It was gone, and she stood face to face with her Dream, that for two thousand years had slumbered in the blood of her and her line. She stood, with mouth agape and eyes that hailed, her thick throat full of

suppressed clamour. The other was the Dream now, and *these!* . . . They came down, mad and noisy and bright—Mænades, Thyades, satyrs, fauns—naked, in hides of beasts, ungirded, dishevelled, wreathed and garlanded, dancing, singing, shouting. The thudding of their hooves shook the ground, and the clash of their timbrels and the rustling of their thyrsi filled the air. They brandished frontal bones, the dismembered quarters of kids and goats; they struck the bronze cantharus, they tossed the silver obba up aloft. Down a cleft of rocks and woods they came, trooping to a wide seashore with the red of the sunset behind them. She saw the evening light on the sleek and dappled hides, the gilded ivory and rich brown of their legs and shoulders, the white of inner arms held up on high, their wide red mouths, the quivering of the twin flesh-gouts on the necks of the leaping fauns. And, shutting out the glimpse of sky at the head of the deep ravine, the god himself descended, with his car full of drunken girls who slept with the serpents coiled about them.

Shouting and moaning and frenzied, leaping upon one another with libidinous laughter and beating one another with the half-stripped thyrsi, they poured down to the yellow sands and the anemonied pools of the shore. They raced to the water, that gleamed pale as nacre in the deepening twilight in the eye of the evening star. They ran along its edge over their images in the wet sands, calling their lost companion.

"Hasten, hasten!" they cried, and one of them, a young man with a torso noble as the dawn and shoulder-lines strong as those of the eternal hills, ran here and there calling her name.

"Louder, louder!" she called back in ecstasy.

Something dropped and tinkled against the fender.

It was one of her hairpins. One side of her hair was in a loose tumble; she threw up the small head on the superb thick neck.

“Louder!—I cannot hear! Once more——”

The throwing up of her head that had brought down the rest of her hair had given her a glimpse of herself in the glass over the mantelpiece. For the last time that formidable “Beware!” sounded like thunder in her ears; the next moment she had snapped with her fingers the ribbon that was cutting into her throbbing throat. He with the torso and those shoulders was seeking her . . . how should he know her in that dreary garret, in those joyless habiliments? He would as soon know his Own in that crimson-bodiced, wire-framed dummy by the window yonder! . . .

Her fingers clutched at the tawdry mercerised silk of her blouse. There was a rip, and her arms and throat were free. She panted as she tugged at something that gave with a short “click-click,” as of steel fastenings; something fell against the fender. . . . These also. . . . She tore at them, and kicked them as they lay about her feet as leaves lie about the trunk of a tree in autumn. . . .

“Ah!”

And as she stood there, as if within the screen of a spectrum that deepened to the band of red, her eyes fell on the leopard-skin at her feet. She caught it up, and in doing so saw purple grapes—purple grapes that issued from the mouth of a paper bag on the table. With the dappled pelt about her she sprang forward. The juice spurted through them into the mass of her loosened hair. Down her body there was a spilth of seeds and pulp. She cried hoarsely aloud.

“Once more—oh, answer me! Tell me my name!”

Ed's steps were heard on the oilcloth portion of the staircase.

"My name—oh, my name!" she cried in an agony of suspense. . . . "Oh, they will not wait for me! They have lighted the torches—they run up and down the shore with torches—oh, cannot you see me? . . ."

Suddenly she dashed to the chair on which the litter of linings and tissue-paper lay. She caught up a double handful and crammed them on the fire. They caught and flared. There was a call upon the stairs, and the sound of somebody mounting in haste.

"Once—once only—my name!"

The soul of the Bacchante rioted, struggled to escape from her eyes. Then as the door was flung open, she heard, and gave a terrifying shout of recognition.

"I hear—I almost hear—but once more. . . . *Io! Io, Io, Io!*"

Ed, in the doorway, stood for one moment agape; the next, ignorant of the full purport of his own words—ignorant that though man may come westwards he may yet bring his worship with him—ignorant that to make the Dream the Reality and the Reality the Dream is Heaven's dreadfulest favour—and ignorant that, that Edge once crossed, there is no return to the sanity and sweetness and light that are only seen clearly in the moment when they are lost for ever—he had dashed down the stairs crying in a voice hoarse and high with terror:

"She's mad! She's mad!"



ROLAND PERTWEE

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ROLAND PERTWEE

SENTIMENTAL RUBBISH

I WAS never a man who believed in a lot of sentimental rubbish, and to the best of my belief I have ordered my life accordingly. Perhaps it would be truer and more to the point to say I have ordered the lives of those around me over whose destinies I have control in a spirit of firm and rational common sense. Yet here again I may be giving a wrong impression, for I am no employer of labour or master of men on the grand scale. Neither am I the father of a large and what is called a rising family. I have a family, it is true, of one—a son. So, after all that preamble, my sway boils itself down to the control of a single issue, for an honest man must always discount his wife as coming under his jurisdiction.

There is no senior or junior partner in real marriage : of that I am confident ; and, although a man who likes to have his own way, I have yet breadth of mind sufficient to realise that one is not the only person entitled to claim that indulgence.

But in the matter of bringing up a son there is a difference. To the best of my ability I have tried to stand for my boy as an example of how a man should behave. I have always striven to show him the value of reticence,

and of taking the knocks in life without raising a wail over them.

The principle of keeping a stiff upper lip I started to inculcate over the first cut knee, occasioned by the first serious cropper on the gravel path outside our house.

"That's a terrible noise for a man to make, Dicky," I said reproachfully.

"B-but it-t-turts s-so, Dad-die," he wailed.

"The more reason to be brave about it."

"I—d—don' wan' to be b-brave—I w-wan' to cry." And he started afresh.

"Nothing in this world is the better by being cried about, old son. We must take what comes along with a grin, and then you'll find——"

But just at that moment his mother appeared.

"It would have been more to the point to have sponged his knees with some hot water," she said; and gathering him up in her arms, she carried him, howling with renewed vigour, toward the bathroom.

"It's all wrong," I told her later. "You undermined the lesson I had started."

"There was gravel in his knees under the skin; there may have been tetanus germs, too—and you wasted five minutes just talking."

"That's absurd," I answered. "Ridiculous! Who ever heard of a child coming to any harm from a fall?"

Women have a knack of putting a man in the wrong. It is part of their nature, I suppose. Just to prove how obviously at fault she had been, I dropped in to the doctor after lunch and told him the silly suggestion. Of course he pooh-poohed the whole idea.

As I was leaving, he laughed and said, "So you're posing as the Spartan father, what?"

"Why should you laugh at that?" I queried.

He looked at me whimsically.

"One remembers things," he answered. "I cannot help bringing to mind the morning that boy was born."

"Anything that occurs with a doctor is in confidence," I replied hotly.

"Am I breaking one?"

"Even reference to such a thing—I—I had had very little sleep. And——"

"Why excuse yourself? God knows it was natural enough. There are times with all of us——"

"I must be going."

"All right," he smiled. "And you needn't worry yourself about those tetanus germs."

"I'm not worrying—it was my wife."

"Oh, quite. Yet—er—it was you who came to see me—not she. Afternoon."

"Of course the boy must go to a boarding school—vital part of his education—knock the nonsense out of him—learn to stand on his own feet."

"Yet awhile?"

"I never suggested yet awhile—but we must look ahead—face essentials. A boy who doesn't go to a boarding-school——"

"I know," said my wife, "and I want him to go. I want him to do all the right things at the right time. I should hate to think of Dicky not going to a boarding-school. When shall we send him?"

"Oh, well—sometime or another—not yet. Be absurd to send him yet awhile—little chap like that."

Years after I heard my wife saying, "I kept Dicky at home a year longer than my husband intended."

"How?" said her friend.

But I didn't catch the answer. I have often wondered

what it was, for we were in perfect agreement about the time he should be sent to Rathmoral; but somehow I never found an opening to put the question. For six weeks before Richard's first term I spent a good deal of time with the boy, and I venture to believe the time was not ill-spent.

"It's your first battle," I told him, "and you must enter it light-heartedly. All those curls must come off, y'know."

"Yes, Dads."

"You'd better get used to calling me pater, otherwise chaps will be chaffing you."

"Yes, Dads."

"Make a start, then—get used to picking up ideas readily, and don't fidget with that door-handle."

"Yes, Dads."

"Pater."

"Yes, Pater."

"Nothing leads to a boy having a bad time quicker than sentimentalities—know what I mean?"

"Blubbing."

"That sort of thing—and being too soft in his ways. Want to be as manly as you can, put your hands in your pockets—wear your cap as if it meant something."

"Yes, Dads—Pater."

"When the day comes for you to be off, don't make a fuss—bad for everyone, fussing. Give your mother a kiss, shake hands with me. Slap on your hat, and get away like a gentleman."

He looked such a little chap standing by the door twiddling with the handle, I hadn't the heart to scold him when he replied: "Yes, Dads."

"Away you go, then," said I, and he capered off to the garden.

I do not believe for a moment I imagined my words

would take root; it was more on general principles I spoke them, and when everything happened just as I had set it forth, I confess to experiencing the queerest sensations.

He went through his paces like an actor in a play, with a careful observance of every detail. In one essential only did he vary the programme from my setting, and that was to slap on his hat, a very detestable bowler prescribed in the equipment-table from Rathmoral, prior to kissing his mother farewell and shaking hands with me. Then he bustled out to witness the iron-bound wooden chest containing his belongings being carried to the cab.

I happened to catch my wife's eye, and she said:

"My little boy is quite, quite dead, and only the man remains."

"Nonsense," I replied; "he's a very fine little gentleman." And I followed him out into the hall. I found him there breathing jerkily through his nose, and his mouth screwed up as though he had swallowed a nasty physic.

"That was first-rate," I said.

"W-was it, Pater?"

I smacked him on the back.

"Just right." The man with the box had his back towards us. "I'm proud of you, and—and you can give me a kiss if you like, Dicky."

After all, it made it easier for the boy.

.

I venture to state affirmatively that no young officer in the New Army looked better in his uniform than my son. To be biased is no failing of mine, and if one of the many friends that Richard brought to the house during the months of his training had appeared a better specimen of

manhood than he I would not hesitate to say so. It may have been tactless of me to express the view in the presence of other families who also had their sons serving with the Colours, but, after all, there is no great harm in observing undisputable facts.

So many parents lose perspective where their children are concerned, and sometimes it has been my misfortune to endure for hours the adulations of this or that father or mother upon the respective merits of their soldier-son. They seem to forget that the photograph, so prominently displayed in all the reception-rooms, is silently disputing the authenticity of half they are saying. Personally, I don't believe in all this elaborate exhibition—for my own part, I carry a photograph of Richard in my note-case, where it is not forcing itself upon the attention of all observers. Sometimes in sheer self-defence I have been obliged to take it out and show it to people when they are becoming too extravagant in acclaiming their own wares.

The result has generally been satisfactory, and doubly so when I have been persuaded to say a few words about the boy.

When one has passed the age for fighting it is good to reflect you can enter a name worthy to take up the challenge. Yes, I'm proud of Richard; he has turned out in all senses the lad I should wish him to be. Good-hearted, straight-limbed, keen, humorous, and not a scrap of sentimental rot anywhere in his composition.

No one deplores this war more than I do, but, as I've said a good many times, I'm afraid, it's giving us backbone—grit. We shall arise none the worse—but better: those of us that are left.

But it was curious how my wife behaved. From the moment Richard joined up, her manner toward him

underwent a complete change. It seemed as though she slipped back to the old nursery days, gentleness, worrying about his under-clothes and cakes and all manner of time-forgotten odds and ends. I spoke to her about it once or twice—silly to coddle a fellow. But she seemed to ignore my words.

"It pleases me," she said, "and it can't matter."

"Mustn't let the young devil get too big an idea of himself—that's all. These are hard times, and we must approach 'em severely."

Richard was in training less than a score of miles from where we lived, so we saw him pretty constantly, and during those visits I gave him to understand quite clearly that his Colonel was not the only O.C. who held him to account.

"I may not be a soldier, but I'll take jolly good care that my son is; and you'll kindly remove those abominable boots from the mantelpiece while I'm talking."

At which the young devil would laugh, and compliment me on my Orderly Room manner.

"But I'm not there now, Dad," he would add—a name that he had slipped back into the habit of using.

I suppose on an average he dropped in to dinner about once a fortnight. His visits were always unheralded, except for whatever particular form of noise he elected to create on the doorstep. On these occasions I made a point of opening the door to him myself and subduing his exuberance.

"It's all very well in camp or barracks, but you must consider your mother's feelings. A certain amount of reserve, my dear boy——"

Then, one night, just as my wife and I were taking our places at table, we heard a more than usually deafening hullabaloo outside.

"You really must toe the line, my boy," said I, as he burst into the hall.

"Parade, Dis-miss!" he roared. Then, "Chuck it, Pater, you silly old Field-Marshal—you know you like it." And up went his voice again to shout "Mums!"

"You aren't fit to hold a commission," I rated, as I followed him to the dining-room. "There, look at your mother! You've scared her quite white with all the noise." Which was no less than the truth.

But the boy seemed to ignore the obvious fact, and kissed her so roughly that I corrected him heartily.

"What about a bottle of the old Jolly Roger?" he said, swinging round on me.

"Certainly not," I replied. "We don't want to make things worse."

But his mother interrupted with, "Let's have a bottle, dear, just to-night. I think it would do me good."

And up went Richard's parade-ground voice in a yell of: "Orderly!"

"I will not allow you to address the servants in that manner."

The old man-servant didn't seem to mind, however, and answered the call with a smiling face.

"Bottle of the best," said Richard.

"In this house I give orders," said I.

"Make it a magnum," amended Richard.

And old Charles went out, still smiling.

"You are behaving very badly, Richard, and I cannot understand it. I think, Mother, if you were to say a few words——"

But she just stretched out her hand and patted the boy gently on the arm.

"You're a good old sort, aren't you, Mums?"

"It's all very well," I grumbled, "but if you feel no

obligation to respect your parents, at least remember the uniform you wear demands a certain standard of behaviour."

The boy's eyes rested on mine humorously.

"I'm sticking to the old standard, Dad; the one you gave me," he answered.

"Indeed? Then you are not an apt pupil, my son."

Just at that moment the wine was brought in, so I let the discussion lapse.

I was rather disposed to reproach myself with laxity in allowing the wine to be uncorked, for its effects seemed to heighten Richard's obstreperous mood. For some reason, he recalled the oldest and farthest-off little incidents of his early boyhood.

"I say, Mums, d'you remember that summer holiday in the Lakes, when I had a slice of bread-and-butter coated with sultanas, and was sick after it?"

"Don't be disgusting," said I.

But she: "I remember, darling; of course I remember" (as though it were some pearl of memory) "but you were such a little boy."

"Never mind; it sticks in my head all right. You or someone had just spread the picnic cloth, when suddenly I——"

"I forbid you to bring up these details."

"'Bring up' is good," applauded Richard.

After dinner he sat at the piano and hammered out ragtime tunes, with an execrable touch inimitably his own. Then, with a few inept chords, he changed the tune to an old nursery air, a little song, if I think right, that his mother taught in the back years when there was no war and people lived happily ever afterwards. I happened to look up from my paper, and tears were standing in her eyes.

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"Don't play that infernal thing, Richard; we are not in the nursery now," said I.

He stopped and gave a short laugh.

"No, by Jove. It came back to me, that's all—like other things." He pivoted slowly on the music-stool, and began: "D'you remember, Dad, just before I went to Rathmoral——"

But fearing fresh disclosures, I replied:

"No, and don't intend to try. Draw up a chair and smoke your cigarette quietly."

For a moment he showed signs of obedience, then changed his mind.

"Have I got any decent socks upstairs, Mums?"

"I'll see, darling."

"No, no. I know where to look. Shan't be long."

But he was gone some time, and in a spirit of curiosity I rose and, on some pretext or other, went after him.

There was a heavy pile carpet on the bedroom corridor, so my approach was noiseless. His door was partly open, and his back toward me.

Why, I don't know—perhaps to admire his broad shoulders—but I did not make my presence known. He was standing by the dressing-table taking letters from an open drawer—I recognised them; they were from the girl to whom he was betrothed. He tied them in a neat packet and thoughtfully placed it in his breast-pocket. His eye fell on a little ebony cat with an absurd ribbon about its neck that his mother had given him on a trivial occasion. He smiled—I saw the reflection of it in the mirror: a queer smile, half-boyish, half-mannish. Then I turned and went quickly and softly back to the drawing-room.

A moment later he was whistling noisily as he came down the stairs.

"Nothing doing 'cept joy patterns which aren't regulation," he said, as he came in. "Hullo! look at the time. I must fly." The tone of his voice smothered an odd feeling which that glimpse through the door had set in motion.

His feet rattled a sort of breakdown on the parquet floor.

"Toodle'oo, dear old Pater, By-oh, Mums, dear old thing."

"And next time you come, perhaps you'll make a little less noise," I suggested.

"P'r'aps I shall," he laughed.

His mother rose and kissed him with more than usual gentleness. His arms seemed to tighten about her; then he threw back his head and shouted:

"Disengage—I'll lose the train."

The mantelpiece vases "zinged" from the intensity of sound.

He did not wait for any rebuke, but rushed out of the room and, grabbing his cap from the stand, rattled down the steps, yelling, "So long, everybody."

His mother stood by the door long after he had gone. I was glancing at the evening paper when she returned.

"Don't know what possessed the boy to-night," I grumbled.

For a while she made no answer, then crossed and laid a hand on my shoulder.

"Our boy—my little boy—he's going to France to-morrow."

I dropped the paper in my lap. Her face went pathetically white, her lower lip drawn in.

"Nonsense!" I said. "Nonsense! He—did he tell you so?"

She shook her head.

"Then why jump to such absurd conclusions?"

"I just know," she said very simply.

I rose and threw the paper into the grate, saying:

"Ridiculous! Hysterical nonsense! Working yourself into a state about nothing. Wouldn't the boy have said so?—Course he would!"

"You've forgotten when he went to Rathmoral, and my little boy died."

But I could only repeat, "Absurd—without saying good-bye! Impossible!"

"You taught him," said she. "It was the old lesson."

The glimpse through the open doorway came back with startling vividness and an awful significance.

"If you are going to talk like this, I—I simply can't stay in the same room. You—I——" and I walked out, slamming the door.

Going to France, indeed! I laughed at the bare idea. I was not going to distress myself with imaginings of that order. These were stern times—but the fire in the dining-room was out, and I did not propose to sit in the cold. Neither did I propose to go to our bedroom, where she might follow me and torment me with more sentimental rubbish. The thought of seeking sanctuary in Richard's room chilled me, and presently I found I had wandered into the bathroom, and there, for no particular reason I can trace, arose the memory of the day when my son was born. It was in the bathroom the doctor had found me, with my head resting against a cold-water pipe. It was there he told me the news, and I—— But every man has his moment of weakness, and if the mere fact of being in a bathroom were to remind me of mine, it was clear I had better go elsewhere. Why I should have run I cannot understand, but I did—I ran aimlessly—until I came to the narrow flight of stairs leading to

the attic. I was panting a little when I reached the top. The moon was shining through the slanted window, and the rays pitched on the faint familiar outline of Richard's old school-box—dusty, deserted and ignored.

It was the dust of the place made me choke, and sitting on a trunk, I coughed and coughed—and then I knew that I wasn't coughing—I was crying, gustily, noisily—boo-hooing like a child. My wife came to me then, drawn by the same instinct that knew so unerringly our son would sail on the morrow. She knelt beside me, her arms round my neck and all her pretty dress on the unswept cob-webbed floor, saying:

“Hush, dear! Don't cry so. He'll come back.”

“He didn't even say good-bye.”

“He did, dear, he did—splendidly. And slapped his cap on his head as though it meant something.” Then, as she took my silly old head and pillowed it on her breast, she murmured:

“I feel as if my little boy had come to life again, and it is the man who has gone away.”

LENNOX ROBINSON

A PAIR OF MUDDY SHOES

I AM going to try to write it down quite simply, just as it happened. I shall try not to exaggerate anything.

I am twenty-two years old, my parents are dead, I have no brothers or sisters; the only near relation I have is Aunt Margaret, my father's sister. She is unmarried and lives alone in a little house in the country in the west of county Cork. She is kind to me and I often spend my holidays with her, for I am poor and have few friends.

I am a school-teacher—that is to say, I teach drawing and singing. I am a visiting teacher at two or three schools in Dublin. I make a fair income, enough for a single woman to live comfortably on, but father left debts behind him, and until these are paid off I have to live very simply. I suppose I ought to eat more and eat better food. People sometimes think I am nervous and highly strung: I look rather fragile and delicate, but really I am not. I have slender hands, with pale, tapering fingers—the sort of hands people call “artistic.”

I hoped very much that my aunt would invite me to spend Christmas with her. I happened to have very little money; I had paid off a big debt of poor father's, and that left me very short, and I felt rather weak and ill.



LENNOX ROBINSON

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I didn't quite know how I'd get through the holidays unless I went down to my aunt's. However, ten days before Christmas the invitation came. You may be sure I accepted it gratefully, and when my last school broke up on the 20th I packed my trunk, gathered up the old sentimental songs Aunt Margaret likes best, and set off for Rosspatrick.

It rains a great deal in West Cork in the winter: it was raining when Aunt Margaret met me at the station. "It's been a terrible month, Peggy," she said, as she turned the pony's head into the long road that runs for four muddy miles from the station to Rosspatrick. "I think it's rained every day for the last six weeks. And the storms! We lost a chimney two days ago: it came through the roof, and let the rain into the ceiling of the spare bedroom. I've had to make you up a bed in the lumber-room till Jeremiah Driscoll can be got to mend the roof."

I assured her that any place would do me; all I wanted was her society and a quiet time.

"I can guarantee you those," she said. "Indeed, you look tired out: you look as if you were just after a bad illness or just before one. That teaching is killing you."

The lumber-room was really very comfortable. It was a large room with two big windows; it was on the ground floor, and Aunt Margaret had never used it as a bedroom because people are often afraid of sleeping on the ground floor.

We stayed up very late talking over the fire. Aunt Margaret came with me to my bedroom; she stayed there for a long time, fussing about the room, hoping I'd be comfortable, pulling about the furniture, looking at the bedclothes.

At last I began to laugh at her. "Why shouldn't I

be comfortable? Think of my horrid little bedroom in Brunswick Street! What's wrong with this room?"

"Nothing—oh, nothing," she said rather hurriedly, and kissed me and left me.

I slept very well. I never opened my eyes till the maid called me, and then after she had left me I dozed off again. I had a ridiculous dream. I dreamed I was interviewing a rich old lady: she offered me a thousand a year and comfortable rooms to live in. My only duty was to keep her clothes from moths; she had quantities of beautiful, costly clothes, and she seemed to have a terror of them being eaten by moths. I accepted her offer at once. I remember saying to her gaily, "The work will be no trouble to me, I like killing moths."

It was strange I should say that, because I really don't like killing moths—I hate killing anything. But my dream was easily explained, for when I woke a second later (as it seemed), I was holding a dead moth between my finger and thumb. It disgusted me just a little bit—that dead moth pressed between my fingers, but I dropped it quickly, jumped up, and dressed myself.

Aunt Margaret was in the dining-room, and full of profuse and anxious inquiries about the night I had spent. I soon relieved her anxieties, and we laughed together over my dream and the new position I was going to fill. It was very wet all day and I didn't stir out of the house. I sang a great many songs, I began a pencil-drawing of my aunt—a thing I had been meaning to make for years—but I didn't feel well, I felt headachy and nervous—just from being in the house all day, I suppose. I felt the greatest disinclination to go to bed. I felt afraid, I don't know of what.

Of course I didn't say a word of this to Aunt Margaret. That night the moment I fell asleep I began to dream.

I thought I was looking down at myself from a great height. I saw myself in my nightdress crouching in a corner of the bedroom. I remember wondering why I was crouching there, and I came nearer and looked at myself again, and then I saw that it was not myself that crouched there—it was a large white cat, it was watching a mouse-hole. I was relieved and I turned away. As I did so I heard the cat spring. I started round. It had a mouse between its paws, and it looked up at me, growling as a cat does. Its face was like a woman's face—was like my face. Probably that doesn't sound at all horrible to you, but it happens that I have a deadly fear of mice. The idea of holding one between my hands, of putting my mouth to one, of—oh, I can't bear even to write it.

I think I woke screaming. I know when I came to myself I had jumped out of bed and was standing on the floor. I lit the candle and searched the room. In one corner were some boxes and trunks; there might have been a mouse-hole behind them, but I hadn't the courage to pull them out and look. I kept my candle lighted and stayed awake all night.

The next day was fine and frosty. I went for a long walk in the morning and for another in the afternoon. When bedtime came I was very tired and sleepy. I went to sleep at once and slept dreamlessly all night.

It was the next day that I noticed my hands getting queer. "Queer" perhaps isn't the right word, for, of course, cold does roughen and coarsen the skin, and the weather was frosty enough to account for that. But it wasn't only that the skin was rough, the whole hand looked larger, stronger, not like my own hand. How ridiculous this sounds, but the whole story is ridiculous.

I remember once, when I was a child at school, putting on another girl's boots by mistake one day. I had to go

about till evening in them, and I was perfectly miserable. I could not stop myself from looking at my feet, and they seemed to me to be the feet of another person. That sickened me, I don't know why. I felt a little like that now when I looked at my hands. Aunt Margaret noticed how rough and swollen they were, and she gave me cold cream which I rubbed on them before I went to bed.

I lay awake for a long time. I was thinking of my hands. I didn't seem to be able not to think of them. They seemed to grow bigger and bigger in the darkness; they seemed monstrous hands, the hands of some horrible ape, they seemed to fill the whole room. Of course if I had struck a match and lit the candle I'd have calmed myself in a minute, but, frankly, I hadn't the courage. When I touched one hand with the other it seemed rough and hairy, like a man's.

At last I fell asleep. I dreamed that I got out of bed and opened the window. For several minutes I stood looking out. It was bright moonlight and bitterly cold. I felt a great desire to go for a walk. I dreamed that I dressed myself quickly, put on my slippers, and stepped out of the window. The frosty grass crunched under my feet. I walked, it seemed for miles, along a road I never remember being on before. It led uphill; I met no one as I walked.

Presently I reached the crest of the hill, and beside the road, in the middle of a bare field, stood a large house. It was a gaunt, three-storied building, there was an air of decay about it. Maybe it had once been a gentleman's place, and was now occupied by a herd. There are many places like that in Ireland. In a window of the highest story there was a light. I decided I would go to the house and ask the way home. A gate closed the grass-

grown avenue from the road; it was fastened and I could not open it, so I climbed it. It was a high gate but I climbed it easily, and I remember thinking in my dream, "If this wasn't a dream I could never climb it so easily."

I knocked at the door, and after I had knocked again the window of the room in which the light shone was opened, and a voice said, "Who's there? What do you want?"

It came from a middle-aged woman with a pale face and dirty strands of grey hair hanging about her shoulders.

I said, "Come down and speak to me; I want to know the way back to Rosspatrick."

I had to speak two or three times to her, but at last she came down and opened the door mistrustfully. She only opened it a few inches and barred my way. I asked her the road home, and she gave me directions in a nervous, startled way.

Then I dreamed that I said, "Let me in to warm myself."

"It's late; you should be going home."

But I laughed, and suddenly pushed at the door with my foot and slipped past her.

I remember she said, "My God," in a helpless, terrified way. It was strange that she should be frightened, and I, a young girl all alone in a strange house with a strange woman, miles from any one I knew, should not be frightened at all. As I sat warming myself by the fire while she boiled the kettle (for I had asked for tea), and watching her timid, terrified movements, the queerness of the position struck me, and I said, laughing, "You seem afraid of me."

"Not at all, miss," she replied, in a voice which almost trembled.

"You needn't be, there's not the least occasion for it," I said, and I laid my hand on her arm.

She looked down at it as it lay there, and said again, "Oh, my God," and staggered back against the range.

And so for half a minute we remained. Her eyes were fixed on my hand which lay on my lap; it seemed she could never take them off it.

"What is it?" I said.

"You've the face of a girl," she whispered, "and—God help me—the hands of a man."

I looked down at my hands. They were large, strong and sinewy, covered with coarse red hairs. Strange to say they no longer disgusted me: I was proud of them—proud of their strength, the power that lay in them.

"Why should they make you afraid," I asked. "They are fine hands. Strong hands."

But she only went on staring at them in a hopeless, frozen way.

"Have you ever seen such strong hands before?" I smiled at her.

"They're—they're Ned's hands," she said at last, speaking in a whisper.

She put her own hand to her throat as if she were choking, and the fastening of her blouse gave way. It fell open. She had a long throat; it was moving as if she were finding it difficult to swallow. I wondered whether my hands would go round it.

Suddenly I knew they would, and I knew why my hands were large and sinewy, I knew why power had been given to them. I got up and caught her by the throat. She struggled so feebly; slipped down, striking her head against the range; slipped down on to the red-tiled floor and lay quite still, but her throat still moved under my hand and I never loosened my grasp.

And presently, kneeling over her, I lifted her head and bumped it gently against the flags of the floor. I did this again and again; lifting it higher, and striking it harder and harder, until it was crushed in like an egg, and she lay still. She was choked and dead.

And I left her lying there and ran from the house, and as I stepped on to the road I felt rain in my face. The thaw had come.

When I awoke it was morning. Little by little my dream came back and filled me with horror. I looked at my hands. They were so tender and pale and feeble. I lifted them to my mouth and kissed them.

But when Mary called me half an hour later she broke into a long, excited story of a woman who had been murdered the night before, how the postman had found the door open and the dead body. "And sure, miss, it was here she used to live long ago; she was near murdered once, by her husband, in this very room; he tried to choke her, she was half killed—that's why the mistress made it a lumber-room. They put him in the asylum afterwards; a month ago he died there I heard."

My mother was Scottish, and claimed she had the gift of prevision. It was evident she had bequeathed it to me. I was enormously excited. I sat up in bed and told Mary my dream.

She was not very interested, people seldom are in other people's dreams. Besides, she wanted, I suppose, to tell her news to Aunt Margaret. She hurried away. I lay in bed and thought it all over. I almost laughed, it was so strange and fantastic.

But when I got out of bed I stumbled over something. It was a little muddy shoe. At first I hardly recognised it, then I saw it was one of a pair of evening shoes I had, the other shoe lay near it. They were a pretty little

pair of dark blue satin shoes, they were a present to me from a girl I loved very much, she had given them to me only a week ago.

Last night they had been so fresh and new and smart. Now they were scratched, the satin cut, and they were covered with mud. Some one had walked miles in them.

And I remembered in my 'dream how I had searched for my shoes and put them on.

Sitting on the bed, feeling suddenly sick and dizzy, holding the muddy shoes in my hand, I had in a blinding instant a vision of a red-haired man who lay in this room night after night for years, hating a sleeping white-faced woman who lay beside him, longing for strength and courage to choke her. I saw him come back, years afterwards—freed by death—to this room; saw him seize on a feeble girl too weak to resist him; saw him try her, strengthen her hands, and at last—through her—accomplish his unfinished deed . . . The vision passed all in a flash as it had come. I pulled myself together. "That is nonsense, impossible," I told myself. "The murderer will be found before evening."

But in my hand I still held the muddy shoes. I seem to be holding them ever since.





© E. O. Hoppe

MAY SINCLAIR

From a Camera Portrait by E. O. Hoppe

MAY SINCLAIR

THE BAMBINO

No. That isn't mine. It's a thing of Frances Archdale's, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Jack Archdale. You know the man I mean. He buys pictures.

You think it's odd he didn't buy this one? Wait till you've heard the story.

I've seen her sitting like that, like a Flemish Madonna : sloping knees, and the naked slip of the child standing between her hands ; her hands half holding, half adoring. *He* must have seen her—and her hands. They're in the centre of the picture, large and white and important ; as if Frances had known.

You'd have thought it wasn't possible to hate a woman so unfortunate as she was. She ought to have been immune. Yet I believe I'd have hated her even if she hadn't smashed that incomparable old Chinese bowl poor Lawrence left me. But no doubt that began it : the sight of the precious thing slipping through those large awkward hands that were always in movement, always seizing and dropping things, the long fingers splaying ; and her husky drawl : "I'm so sor-ry, Mr. Simp-son." She sent me a blue and white bowl from Liberty's the next day, and

seemed to think that, if anything, that left me in her debt.

On the whole, she was let off easy, because, with all her multiplied misfortunes, she never faced the full implications of disaster. She was too complacent.

I remember the season when Jack Archdale brought her to town and we all raved about her, his slender Flemish Madonna, with her long, slender shoulders, her long, slender, skim-milk face, her long, slender nose that overhung her upper lip that overhung the lower one that overhung the soft round of her chin sloping away into her neck. And the thin gold rain of hair on her cheeks, loosened from the two sleek bands, untidily. There was something so helplessly yielding and retreating about that profile that you weren't prepared for her obstinacy, that obstinacy which——

Well, it was the helplessness that caught Jack Archdale.

The first time I saw her, at their house-warming, she was unfortunate; standing on a priceless Persian rug and pouring claret-cup over it from the glass she tilted, following Archdale with her pale, moony eyes. Her name was Adela.

He adored her in a funny, abject way, sitting dumb (you couldn't talk to Adela) and staring at her. When the baby came he adored the baby; they both adored it, and they were both jealous of the adoration. You'd come in and find them quarrelling about which was to hold it. He'd be saying, "Give him to me. I want him." And she, with her queer drawl, "You might let me have him, Jack. He's more mine than yours."

And he'd shout back at her, "He *isn't*." Not ragging, you know, but quite fierce and serious.

He talked about the Bambino half the time; he'd bring the conversation round to him from anywhere. I remember dining with them one night before they left

London. (They were always asking me because of Frances.) He'd bought a picture of mine that year and he thought it funny to say, "Roly doesn't come to see *us*, he comes to see his old picture."

She sat there, stretching her white goose neck to get out her drawl. "Aren't you aw-w-fly glad when pee-ple buy your pictures?"

He tried to head her off. "He isn't. He feels as I should if somebody bought the Bambino."

And she went blundering on. "He knows it's safe with us. He know's it's all in the family."

I said he didn't know anything of the sort. Frances had chucked me the week before, and I was still bitter about it and afraid of Adela because she had an unpleasant way of throwing Frances at me. (You summed Adela up when you said she had no tact.) I could see Archdale making signs to her, but she did it again with her lazy air of not being able to help it.

"What are you going to do with yourself this winter?" The poor woman couldn't see she hadn't changed the subject. She was like that.

In the smoke-room he worked round to *his* subject again. I'd asked him how he liked his country house, and he said, "It'll be a jolly place for the Bambino to grow up in. And to step into when I'm dead."

"It's all very well," he said. "He's delicious to kiss and all that, and he'll never be prettier than he is now. But I wish one could skip fifteen years or so. I want the Bambino grown up, *now*. I can't wait twenty years to know what he's going to do, the sort of things he'll say, what his mind'll be like. He's got no end of a mind, Roly, already. At thirteen months. You wouldn't believe it."

"Women are funny," he said. "Adela doesn't want

him to grow up. She'd keep him a Bambino always if she had her way."

I can see him with that queer, ironic face of his, griping his old briar pipe with his teeth while he smiled, thinking of the things the Bambino would do when he grew up.

It was four years before I got the rest of the story; and what I couldn't make out, what I couldn't even have tried to get from either of them, Frances told me.

I'd lost sight of them somehow all that time; then one day I met Jack Archdale at Frances's, and he motored us both down to that place of theirs in Buckinghamshire. I can't say I enjoyed the run. Archdale was a sulky, nervous driver. He stopped dead to change his gear, and he took his corners badly. That wasn't like him; he used to be so cool and careful and efficient, and I remember wondering why on earth he was so jumpy and why he sulked so now. He didn't even rise when I asked after the blessed Bambino.

And we weren't in his house five minutes before he let us see that he'd grown a temper. He hadn't the ghost of one to start with; that I can swear to. I supposed it was the fruit of seven years' marriage with a goose-faced Madonna.

She hadn't changed, except that she seemed much more glad to see us than she used to be; so glad, in fact, that it struck me she was positively afraid to be left alone with Archdale and his temper.

I expected every minute that he'd say, "Where's the Bambino?" I said it myself at last, to create a diversion.

Adela seemed gratified, and went out to get him, and Archdale got up and stood by the window with his back to us, pretending to stare at things in his garden. Frances looked around at him uneasily, and I supposed then that

he and Adela had quarrelled about the kiddy. It was what they would do. I began to long for the Bambino to appear and break the tension. I think I expected an excited, dramatic entry; I reminded myself that the Bambino was now five years old.

So I wasn't prepared to see Adela come back with a baby in her arms—a baby too young to display excitement, too young to talk. It could only make queer, immature noises.

I said: "What? A new Bambino? And you never told me!"

Adela was smiling stupidly, and Archdale kept his station by the window. The new baby looked as if it didn't see any of us. There was something odd, something morbid about its detachment, and I touched its soft magnolia cheek to feel if it were real.

"I can see it's new," I said, "but—isn't it awfully like the old Bambino?"

"It is the old Bambino. There isn't any other."

She put it to the ground. Then I saw.

She had got her way. The Bambino would be a baby all its life. Its mind had stopped dead at fifteen months.

Archdale turned, as if he had got up courage at last to stand with her and see her through. He had braced himself to look at the Bambino.

It couldn't walk; it sort of toddled, with a series of little headlong, shambling rushes, wagging its head till the heavy, bulging forehead swung forward and upset its balance. It hadn't sense to grab at things and save itself.

When it fell Archdale rushed to it with a sudden gasping cry. He held it up in his arms, turning with it to Frances and me sternly, as if he defied us to see anything in it but its beauty.

Oh, yes, it was beautiful. It isn't true that idiots always have vacant faces. The Bambino's face was full, full of a heavy, sleeping mournfulness—mournfulness carved into the exquisite, morbid bow of his little mouth, into the straight, pure line of his nose, and fixed in his black, drowsy eyes. But an unutterable, not human, mournfulness, without any reminiscence or foreboding. Animal—the unmoving sadness of a cat's eyes would be near it, only that has something human in it.

Adela began talking. "He *is* a little backward. But I tell Jack it's because his mind's too big for his body. He's going to be something wonderful. You've only got to look at his face to see he's thinking." She really thought that.

I believe even Jack thought then it wasn't quite hopeless. He had theories; tried experiments; took infinite precautions. He had the nurseries moved to the ground floor so that Adela shouldn't carry him up and down stairs, and a gate put at the bottom of the staircase so that he shouldn't crawl up and fall down it. The day nursery was hung with glittering balls, and glass prisms that shook in the sun and sent rainbow patches darting about the walls and ceiling. And there was a peal of bells he used to ring. He thought if you could once catch the Bambino's attention you might draw his mind out of its hiding-place. They gave him yards and yards of paper ribbons, pink and green and blue, to play with. The Bambino had dark days when he sat on his big mackintosh mattress like a porcelain idol, doing nothing but wag his head. And he had bright days when he seized the paper ribbons and tore them to bits. And days of surpassing brilliance when he shambled along the garden walks and tore down Jack's delphiniums and gladioli from their borders. His progress

was marked by a trail of decaying blue and scarlet spears.

Frances told me how it happened. Yes; it was Adela; Adela's hands that couldn't hold things; Adela's obstinacy. He had told her not to carry the Bambino up and down stairs. So she did it. The hall stairs were very long and steep, very narrow at the turn. She was coming down them with the Bambino on one arm and the tail of her gown on the other. He caught sight of Archdale in the hall, and was struggling to get to him . . .

Adela doesn't see the connection between that fall and his "backwardness." She doesn't see yet what's happening to Archdale. She doesn't see why they have separate rooms. Nor why he was terrified the other night when she came in with the big lamp in her hands flaring. He jumped up and took it from her, and she stood there splaying her hands and smiling while he growled at her: "You——"

He didn't say it. It was the one word his mind shied at, the word you hoped he'd never have to hear. If you'll believe me, she positively shrieked it. "Really, Jack, anybody'd think I was an idiot!"

He looked at her, and Frances and I looked at each other. We'd both seen the same thing, only I didn't know what it was till Frances told me.

"He can't help it," she said. "He's afraid of everything . . . She wants to have more babies, and he won't let her. He simply couldn't stand seeing her hold them."

I said it was rather cruel; and Frances said, "Oh, yes, cruel. That's the awful thing, how it's changed him."

I suggested that it hadn't changed Adela, and she put it to me. Could I see anything changing Adela?

I couldn't. After all I was sorrier for him, and I said so. I knew Frances didn't like Adela.

But she shook her head, and said, "I'm not sure. He knows the worst and she doesn't. It'll be awful when she sees it. She can't go on pretending when the Bambino . . . Besides, she may have to see what you've seen."

"And that is—?"

She stuck it straight in front of me. "Why, that he hates her."

I suppose that's what I saw.

I wish Frances would take the damned thing away. But she's afraid of it. She's got in too much: the sweet, milk-white, fatuous beauty. And the hands, the terrible, imbecile hands; the insecurity.





ALEC WAUGH

© Walter Barnett

ALEC WAUGH

THE INTRUDER

It was with a feeling of acute disquiet that John Everest read in the evening paper that the Essex total had reached 200 runs for the loss of seven wickets. He had hoped for better things: on the Monday, thanks to a remarkable feat by J. W. Hearne—who had taken seven wickets for no runs—Middlesex had got rid of their opponents for a total of 110, only to be in their turn dismissed for a paltry 104. Luck, however, had been against them. Plum had been caught in the slips off his glove from a ball that rose straight from the pitch: Hendren had been hit in the face and had had to retire when well set: Hearne had, in consequence, found no one to stay with him and had carried his bat; a veritable series of misfortunes, a combination of circumstances that could never occur again. And so John Everest had confidently expected a satisfactory display on the second day and yet here were Essex, in spite of rain, running up an uncomfortably large score; 250 runs would be a great deal to get in a fourth innings, especially if Hendren should be still unfit to play, and Everest noted that Gillingham had been caught by a substitute. It was most annoying. Something was wrong with Middlesex. To

be routed by any innings by Kent, then in the same week to be beaten by Surrey; true, it was only by two wickets, but Middlesex had flung the game away: twice they had had it in their hands, and now to put up a show like this against Essex. He would have to have a long talk with Hugh Anstruther about it. Now that his cricket days were over, that his marriage had become a gentle comforting repose, and he had relinquished the heat and struggle of commerce for the placid discussions of the board-room, his chief concern was the welfare of Middlesex cricket. He divided most of his time between Lord's, the Oval, and the smoking-room of his old school friend, Hugh Anstruther.

John Everest was a keen gardener, and every evening on his return from the city he used to walk round to the conservatory before going into the house. He would scrutinise each plant, would linger before it lovingly, would compare it with his memory of other such plants, in other years, and in other conservatories. Perhaps he would water one or two of them; occasionally, very occasionally, he would pick a flower for his wife. He did this whenever there had been any difference of opinion between them at breakfast. Indeed the presentation of a flower had become a sort of ritual in the family, for Everest was a man of habit; and the ritual served for his wife the purpose of a very useful key to the likes and dislikes of her husband; she could tell from it which traits of her temperament really annoyed him and which did not. "I wonder if I really offended him this morning?" she would say to herself in the afternoon. "It's so hard to tell with him. If he brings me a flower to-night I shall know I did, if he doesn't I shall know that he thought no more about it." And in a little while she had learned what things annoyed him and she had been able to avoid

them, so that now it was only on rare occasions that her husband walked into the drawing-room in the evening with a rather shy, diffident, apologetic "My dear, I thought this rose—I've just cut it for you in the conservatory." At that she would always jump up and run across to him with an "Oh, you darling, how sweet of you! Now where shall I put it?" and she would fasten it in the brooch between her breasts, or she would arrange it in her hair or at her waist, and they would stand close together and then she would quietly take hold of the lapel of his coat, and murmur "Dear!" and pass her arm slowly behind his neck, and their lips would meet in one of those long, comfortable, passionless kisses that re-establish an old relationship.

But they were rare now, these little courtesies of reconciliation. Everest had been married for seven years, he was forty-three years old and had reached the tether of his development. He desired for the rest of his life only a quiet harmony, and his wife was prepared to give it him. Their relationship was static; and on this clouded evening of late August Everest thought only of the velvet bloom of the flowers. He spent a full half-hour in the conservatory watering them, pruning them, admiring them; he then put on his coat and got ready to go back into the house.

As he reached the door of the conservatory he paused. The lamp in the dining-room had just been lit and on the thin yellow blind he could see the shadows of two persons, a man and a woman, standing very close together.

"Jane again," he murmured, "and I suppose that young rascal from the farm!"

Having reached that stage of life when the pleasures of love are entertaining chiefly in recollection, he was interested rather than annoyed and stood still, watching.

He saw the two figures move a little nearer to one another, he saw the hand of the woman play with the lapel of the man's coat and then steal slowly round his neck, he saw their faces come together slowly and cling one against the other; he saw the man's fingers meet beneath the woman's hair, forcing her head back and upwards. It was a long, long kiss, a kiss of unreserved abandonment, and to John Everest it appeared beautiful, and the expression of deep, genuine emotion.

He was surprised though. Jane was a good girl, pretty, graceful, but he had not associated her with such a romantic wooing. He had always regarded the courtships of the poor as a clumsy business, sly, self-conscious, a little ashamed of itself, and coarse in its expression. There must be more in Jane than he had suspected. Perhaps it was the Cinema that had taught her the refinements of love; a strange thought that—that the Cinema should take the place of the old Greek schools of Aphrodite.

He walked round to the front door and was about to fit his latchkey into it when he changed his mind and rang the bell. Jane would have to answer the door, she would be flushed and excited, her hair would be ruffled; he would reprimand her in a kindly manner, and he would smile, say something, just a word, an intonation perhaps, that would let her see that he knew, and she would blush prettily.

The kitchen door slammed, the front door opened and Jane was standing in the hall, cool, calm, with subdued, unkindled eyes, her hair faultlessly arranged beneath a starched white cap, and not a single crease on the spotless linen of her apron; certainly it could not have been Jane. After such an embrace no girl would look like that, and besides the kitchen door had slammed and the kitchen was

on the other side of the house. She could not in the short time that it had taken him to walk from the conservatory to the front door have passed from the dining-room to the kitchen. And if it wasn't Jane who could it have been. He walked across the hall, pushed open the dining-room door and saw standing by the fireplace his wife, her face smiling, warm, inspired, talking to Hugh Anstruther. The door had been ajar; they had not noticed him: he tiptoed out of the room and walked quietly upstairs.

His first emotion was one of intense annoyance. He had been confoundedly inconvenienced; he would be involved in a quarrel with his best friend, there would be a most painful interview, he would have to be firm; he would be forced, in the phrase of counsel that he had employed so often in the Board Room, to adopt a strong attitude. And such a course of procedure was most distasteful to him. He disliked scenes, all his life he had avoided them, he could not recollect a single occasion on which he had expressed a strong emotion in words. He had not even proposed. The announcement in *The Times* that "a marriage had been arranged" was in his case an accurate statement of the facts. He had held Gladys's hand at a dance, and in the cab on the way home had kissed her. Two days later he had had a long talk with her mother; there had been an understanding. While they were engaged he had said, no doubt, a great many surprising if appropriate things to her, but then that had been expected: it was in order, different altogether from the embarrassing and undignified situation of a formal proposition. And now he would have to quarrel with Hugh, he did not see how he could avoid it. It would be most unpleasant, it would mean in all probability the end of their friendship; and without Hugh how empty

his life would be: there was no one else in the small, isolated Essex village whose company he enjoyed. He and Hugh had so much in common, they had been at school together, they had been at Oxford together, there would be no one with whom he could share the old jokes. Gladys was ten years younger than himself and belonged to a different generation; memory was his chief pleasure now. He would be very lonely without Hugh, the old jokes, the old gags, the old stories—nothing left! What could he do with himself?

For one moment he wished with all his heart that he had not found out. He would have been quite happy if he had never known. Why on earth hadn't they drawn the curtains?

These were the thoughts that inspired the first feeling of annoyance. And they sprang naturally from the man himself, they were himself, a true criticism of a sudden and disquieting circumstance. Then the conventional Everest took the upper hand, the Everest of acquired views and assimilated standards, the Everest that read popular fiction and was acquainted with the heroics of the stage. He began to feel as he considered that a man in his position ought to feel. He had been betrayed by his oldest friend, his hospitality had been abused, the sacred laws of property infringed: it was vile, monstrous, unthinkable. He walked up and down his room, his hands clasped angrily behind his back, working himself up into a passion. He was prepared at that moment to declaim in moving oratory on the perfidy of friendship; but by the time he came down to dinner, half an hour later, the real John Everest was once more in the ascendant. He was no longer the martyr, the poor injured friend, he was a middle-aged man, rather bald, a little stout, who had become accustomed to a life of routine, who was

worried by the thought of the unpleasant duty that he had to perform, and was inclined, on the whole, to blame his wife for this annoyance.

The dinner was well cooked and well served, but he did not enjoy it. He sat in his large armchair at the head of his table, watching his wife, with a gathering resentment. She was a beautiful woman, he reflected, he had hardly realised before how beautiful she was; and this fact he noted with displeasure; if she had been less beautiful this troublesome affair would not have happened.

He hardly spoke at all and his wife whom seven years of marriage had taught to appreciate the significance of each frown and smile and shadow, noticed this at once.

"What's the matter, darling? Are you worried?" she asked.

"No, dear; only a little tired."

"Had a hard day at the office?"

"Yes—a little."

"Poor darling! Then you must have up some of that old port you're so fond of; it always cheers you up."

"No, please no . . . really . . . I'd rather not."

"Really no?"

He shook his head and she smiled, but when the maid brought round the pudding she whispered to her to fetch a bottle of the old port, and when the maid had gone she stepped round behind her husband's chair, ran her fingers through his hair and kissed him very gently behind the ear. But he shook his head impatiently.

"I know what it is," she said, "I know: it's your silly old Middlesex, they're being beaten by—let me see who is it? Yes, Essex! That's it, isn't it, they are being beaten by Essex, aren't they?"

"No, it rained most of the day; you ought to have noticed."

"Yes; but what's the score?"

"Oh, 200 for 7, I think; I've forgotten. I didn't see the close of play. At any rate it doesn't matter. Kent are bound to finish top."

"Yes, but what about the second place; you know how disappointed you were when Surrey beat them by two wickets on Saturday."

"Second place is nothing, some one's got to finish there."

There was nothing to do but to drop the conversation and she dropped it.

She was surprised though, very: she thought she understood her husband, that he had no undiscovered country. Certainly up till now she had encountered no mood of his that was unamenable either to port or petting or a discussion of the County championship. For once he had beaten her and she looked at him with a new interest.

"I'll tell you what I'd do after dinner if I were you, John," she said.

"Yes, dear?"

"Go round and have a smoke with Hugh."

"Yes, I suppose that's what I ought to do," he said.

"But I'm a little tired, dear."

"Not too tired for that, it's not more than a hundred yards."

She insisted on his going; as soon as dinner was over, she brought him his hat and coat and literally hustled him out of the house. He was too worried to be amused by it.

He found Hugh in his study writing a letter.

"Ah, splendid," he said. "Come along and sit down, old man, I won't be a minute. You'll find a paper there." And Hugh turned back to his desk.

For the first time in his life Everest felt uncomfortable

sitting silent in his friend's presence. He had always regarded silence as the real test of friendship. At school where you have so many acquaintances he had often asked himself in what lay the real difference between an acquaintance and a friend; and he had decided that it lay in this, that when an acquaintance came into your study you stopped what you were doing and began to talk to him, but with a friend you just nodded and went on, and he sat down on the other chair and picked up a book or a magazine. Friendship was sure of itself, it made no demands. And now after thirty years of unbroken friendship he felt embarrassed because Hugh would not finish his letter and turn round and talk to him.

Yet, even when Hugh had finished his letter he could find nothing to say to him. He did not know how to introduce the awkward subject. Their relationship had been built up slowly by a steady accumulation of trifling incidents, their conversation had been trivial, their amusements trivial. They had never spoken intimately to one another. But they had learnt through a long series of intuitions to know and understand each other perfectly, and Anstruther knew almost at once that Everest had found out about himself and Gladys.

For a moment he was half inclined to hate her. She had come between them, and then he paused realising that neither of them was to blame. They had been thrown together a great deal, he and Everest were always in and out of each other's houses, and he had often found Everest away and had stayed there for a while to talk to Gladys. They were both lonely in their own way. He was a bachelor who missed in his own home the grace and charm of a woman's presence and Everest was not the right sort of husband for a young woman of thirty-one. She was very fond of him, but fondness was not love.

"You can't think how awful it is at times," she had said once to him. "I know everything he's going to do, he never breaks a habit, he even kisses me by habit, three times a day, in the morning, when he comes back from the office, and when we say good-night. I could almost scream sometimes, our whole life together is mapped out. Every Saturday morning he comes into my room, and on no other day. He hasn't missed once, not once, since the first year of our marriage." Gladys demanded more than that from marriage and she and Anstruther had often talked together of the disenchantment of life and of how nothing was good actually, in itself, but only in retrospect and expectation. They indulged their disappointments and would sit for a long while together in a deep sentimental sympathy, and at parting they would press each other's hands and look deeply into each other's eyes. And Anstruther would walk back into his study, softened by this sweet platonic intimacy, this sharing of sympathies with a beautiful and lonely woman. Feelings that he had left behind him long ago in adolescence stirred again within him. And so they had drifted on beguiled by the perilous, calm beauty of their friendship, until one day without warning, not of their own volition, they had found themselves in each other's arms, murmuring face to face the words of love. It was wonderful that so late in life this miracle should have been granted him, and he saw no cause for regret. He was doing no injury to Everest, for Gladys did not love him any less or any differently. The ordered relationship of marriage, a relationship of affection, and duty, and respect, was other, completely other, than this swift, eager, unheeding courtship. It was absurd to judge them by the same standards.

But in this large, silent room with Everest, hurt, baffled, and resentful, each knowing what was in the other's

mind and each waiting for the other to begin, he knew that he had been wrong in imagining that he could have things both ways; that his love for Gladys for all its charm, was swift and abrupt; that it had no depth: and that one had to choose between the relationship that was deep and tranquil and the one that was fleet and passionate, and at his age he had no right to desert the thing of which he was sure, or so it seemed to him.

For a while they remained in a deep embarrassed silence, not knowing what to say nor how to begin. At last Anstruther spoke.

"I saw Raymond yesterday!"

"Raymond," answered Everest, in a dazed, stupid voice, that was unable to focus itself on a different theme, "Raymond!"

"Yes, Raymond, you remember he was Kingsford's fag. That funny-looking fellow with the great goggle eyes and heavy spectacles. You must remember him."

"Yes, I remember him. Study 17." Then, after a pause, "What's he like now?"

"Much the same really, only he's grown fat!"

"Fat?"

"Yes, enormous, great huge pot belly; he's on the Stock Exchange, doing rather well!"

Anstruther paused. It was Everest's turn to say something, but he did not avail himself of the opportunity, and so to avoid a return to the uncomfortable silence, himself continued the conversation.

"You know I can't think of Raymond without remembering that Sunday afternoon when he got hauled up before the Head for bullying. Do you remember?"

A faint smile passed over Everest's features. It was one of their best stories. "Shall I ever forget it," he said.

"Do you remember how all the house prefects were

ordered in and we stood behind the Head's desk in the very hell of a funk without the least idea what it was all about. And how Roberts was absolutely certain that someone had found one of his cribs and Jones was saying that notes were the devil and that if he got safe out of this he'd never send another in his life."

"I thought confirmation had let me in for something," said Everest, "someone always lets out something, more fellows have got the sack through confirmation than anything else."

"And then do you remember our relief when the Chief said 'I've called all you prefects here to report to you a severe case of bullying in the upper dormitories,' and then he produced Raymond, and some wretched little ass, I can't remember his name, who had told his father that the men in his dormitory had been flicking him with wet towels. Can't you see his father standing against the fireplace and saying that he was a public school man himself, that he hated sneaking, that his son was not a sneak, the truth had been dragged out of him."

"And the Chief standing at his desk inking in the loops of all the I's and g's on his time table!" Everest broke in.

"And then 'Now John,' the father said, 'show the headmaster that bruise on your arm.' And the sheepish way the man took off his coat, and the sheepish way he rolled up his sleeve and then that colossal, glorious green and yellow bruise."

"And do you remember the way that Raymond looked at it?"

"And the petulant, annoyed way in which the Chief said, 'Well, Raymond, did you do that?' 'No, sir.' 'But you owned you flicked him.' 'Yes, sir.' 'Then how on earth can you say that you didn't do it?' What a

scene, and then that envious look at the bruise and Raymond's piping, frightened voice, 'Please, sir, I know I didn't do it, I can't flick well enough to have done that!' "

They both laughed heartily, as they had laughed so many times before. "I can't think how we didn't die with laughter," said Everest. "We had some good times."

"And do you remember the divinity prize that Carstairs won?"

"What, the time he saw the paper on the Chief's desk and copied down all the questions and then passed them round the form?"

"Yes, and no one got less than seventy per cent. and Carstairs got ninety-three."

"And then do you remember how the silly ass said he wouldn't take the prize and that it wasn't honest, and was for going and owning up to the Chief."

"Silly ass, we stopped that all right."

"And I should think so, too; after all it was a fair competition, we all knew the questions, he'd looked them up more carefully than we had, he did more work, and that's what prizes are given for, for doing more work than the rest of the form."

"It took us a lot of trouble to make him see it though! Some folk are dense!"

And they sat in a deep, comfortable silence, remembering the past.

"By the way," said Anstruther, "what about the Essex match?"

"It'll be a good game, Middlesex'll want about 250 to win, and even if it keeps fine it'll be a job. Did you see the way the ball was flying about on Monday?"

"Gad, yes! Buckenham got Plum caught off a thing that came up absolutely straight!"

"It ought to be a really first class day's cricket!"

"Well, what about it?" said Anstruther.

Everest thought for a moment.

"I don't see why we shouldn't," he said. "I have not got a Board Meeting or anything. I can get all my letters done before lunch. If you call for me at two o'clock we'll get there before play begins again."

"Splendid!" said Anstruther, "then that's fixed."

And for half an hour they talked as they had talked so often through so many years of school days, school friendships, school cricket matches. Then Everest got up to go. In the hall he stopped to look at a faded photograph of the School House XI. in 1886.

"I wonder what's happened to them all," said Everest. "Where they have gone, we never hear of them, and we were all such friends once."

And they thought sadly of the years that had swept away so much, but that had left their friendship miraculously unimpaired.

"Not much left of it now, is there?" said Everest. Then suddenly he remembered, remembered what he had found out and why he had come, realising also that his friendship for Anstruther went deeper than the recent relationship of marriage, was more intimate, being a direct survival of his youth, and that it was not within his power now to make an end of it.

"Yes, not much left," and then, after a pause, "you know, old man, we mustn't quarrel now."

He looked down at his feet as he said it, being unused to the medium of words. Anstruther understood.

"I'm sorry," he said.

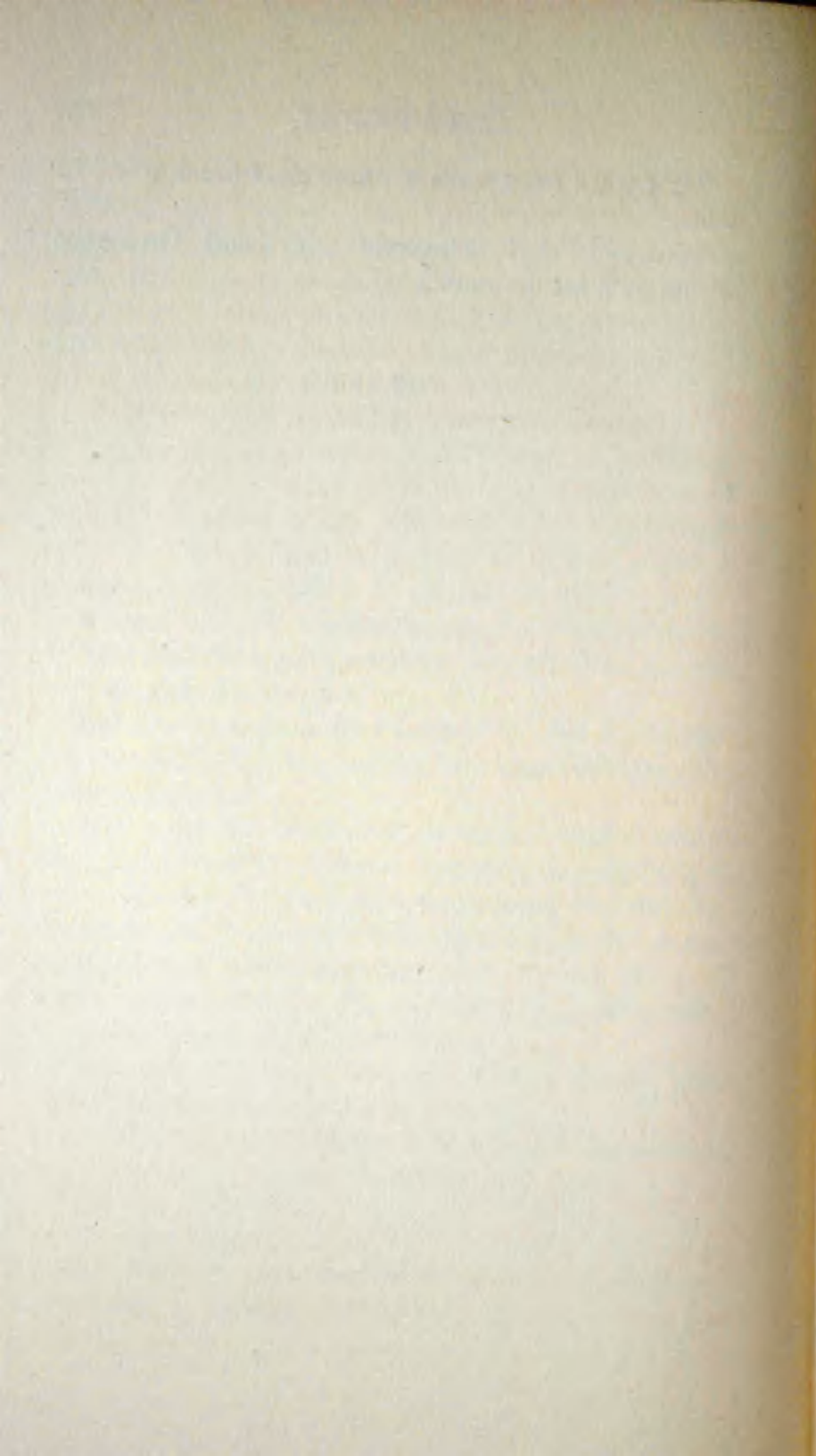
"All right," said Everest.

And they both knew that the matter was settled, done with, never to be reopened.

"And you'll call for me at two o'clock to-morrow," he said.

"Yes, two o'clock, and good luck to them! On a good wicket we'll get the runs."

THE END



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